

OVERVIEW

Process for Developing the State Youth Plan

The State of Arkansas Strategic Five-Year Plan for WIA Title I Youth Activities was developed in accordance with planning guidance provided in *U.S. Department of Labor SESA/JTPA Memorandum No. 72-99: Options for Submitting Plans for the Youth Activities Portion of the Strategic Five-Year Plan for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and the Wagner-Peyser Act*, dated September 15, 1999. The Arkansas plan was developed under Option 2 of that guidance. Under this option, states may file a transition plan addressing only the youth-related items of the WIA Title I State Planning Guidance as published in the February 25, 1999, Federal Register. The youth plan must fully address all planning requirements related to WIA Title I youth activities and have all the youth-related critical elements in place by April 1, 2000. Under this option, Arkansas will receive the entire allocation of WIA Title I youth activities funds by April 1, 2000.

The outline format for the Strategic Five-Year Plan for WIA Title I Youth Activities was included as Attachment II of the memorandum cited above. The outline is based on the planning guidance for a full Strategic Five-Year Plan for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and the Wagner-Peyser Act that was published in the February 25, 1999, Federal Register. To create an outline for the youth plan, the U. S. Department of Labor (USDOL) excerpted elements related to youth activities from the full outline while retaining the original letter-number sequence of the full outline. This process created skips and gaps in the letter-number sequence of the plan.

In keeping with the intent of the Workforce Investment Act, the State of Arkansas has developed a workforce investment plan for youth activities designed to ensure that a comprehensive array of services and community resources will be made available to all eligible in-school and out-of-school youth. These services will be provided within a planned, statewide workforce investment system and will be designed to lead to academic and employment success. In accordance with the Act, the hub of WIA Title I activities is the One-Stop service delivery system; however, services for eligible 14-18 year old youth may actually be provided at a variety of physical locations by One-Stop partners and service providers operating from remote sites and satellite offices. Additional programs and services will be available to all youth through other One-Stop partners.

Many organizations, agencies, and individuals throughout Arkansas collaborated to develop this plan, and this collaboration will continue throughout the implementation process. Contributors to this plan include, but are not limited to, staff of the Arkansas Employment Security Department, the Department of Workforce Education, Arkansas Career Opportunities (Arkansas' School-to-

Work program), the Department of General Education, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Human Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, representatives of the current Arkansas service delivery areas, and workgroups composed of individuals representing a variety of public and private agencies interested in providing quality services to the youth of Arkansas. Representatives of the business community and labor were invited to contribute to this plan through their colleagues on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board or directly by e-mail or standard mail.

The formal process for developing this plan began October 6, 1999, at a planning meeting convened by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. This meeting was attended by representatives of public and private agencies and organizations that provide services to Arkansas youth. Attendees received a copy of the September 15 memorandum cited above, which sets forth planning guidance, and it was announced at this time that Arkansas would submit a plan for WIA Title I youth activities to USDOL under Option 2. A second planning meeting of public and private agency representatives was convened on October 26, 1999. At this meeting, a time line for developing the youth plan was adopted and procedures for submitting contributions to the plan were developed. The deadline for submitting initial contributions to the plan was November 15.

The first draft of the plan was made available to the public December 1, 1999, when it was published on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board Web site at www.state.ar.us/workforce. Comments on the plan were solicited through an announcement published in the statewide newspaper, as well as through a request on the above Web site. Although the official public comment period was limited to 30 days, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will continue to accept comments and suggestions regarding youth services beyond the date on which the plan is submitted to the U. S. Department of Labor for approval. All correspondence related to youth services and the development of the youth plan will be maintained in a file and will be considered if the plan is modified in the future.

General

Under this plan, eligible youth who are age 18-21 will be served primarily through the One-Stop system. Services to eligible youth who are age 14-18 will be provided by One-Stop partners through local school-based programs. In keeping with the “no wrong door” principle of Arkansas' One-Stop service delivery system, electronic connections between partners will enable youth to apply for and receive services through the offices of any One-Stop partner without visiting an actual One-Stop center.

In accordance with Section 123 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, local workforce investment boards will identify eligible providers of youth activities. Awards will be based on

the recommendations of the youth council and criteria established by the state board. Grants and contracts for youth services will be awarded to eligible providers according to the state list on a competitive basis. The local boards will also oversee the activities of youth service providers and will hold them accountable for maintaining performance standards determined by the state board. As directed by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, the Arkansas Employment Security Department is developing procedures for soliciting the services of training providers who are not automatically eligible providers under the Workforce Investment Act. Such providers may include private contractors for on-the-job training, providers of customized training services, and other providers such as community based organizations and other public and private entities. Local workforce investment boards will solicit requests for proposals from contractors and providers of youth services who have performed successfully for them in the past, as well as through general advertisements seeking proposals from new providers.

Youth councils will be responsible for designing a comprehensive program of services to eligible in-school and out-of-school youth in each local area. Each council will be set up in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999. These councils are charged with coordinating all available resources, such as Job Corps, School-to-Work, Youth Opportunity Grants, welfare agencies, the WAGE program, community colleges, education agencies, and other youth-related programs. Information on community-based organizations will be provided to youth as appropriate.

Funds used for youth activities will be provided in accordance with Section 129 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Eligible youth seeking assistance in achieving academic and employment success will have access to effective and comprehensive activities. These activities will include a variety of options for improving educational and skill competencies, as well as providing effective connections to employers. On-going mentoring opportunities will be available, and the mentoring will be provided by caring and committed adults. Training and supportive services will be provided to eligible youth, and incentives for recognition and achievement will be awarded to encourage continuing participation and advancement. Activities that provide opportunities for leadership, personal development, decision-making, citizenship, and community service will be an integral part of the services provided.

Local Plans

In accordance with Section 118 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, each local board, in partnership with the appropriate chief elected official, must develop and submit to the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board a comprehensive 5-year local plan for youth activities that is consistent with this plan.

The local plan must include the following:

- An identification of the workforce investment needs of businesses, jobseekers, and workers in the local area; the current and projected employment opportunities in the local area; and the job skills necessary to obtain such employment opportunities
- A description of the one-stop delivery system to be established or designated in the local area, including:
 - A description of how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers and participants
 - A copy of each memorandum of understanding between the local board and each of the one-stop partners concerning the operation of the one-stop delivery system in the local area
 - A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and chief elected officials to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the local board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent, eligible providers, and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area
 - A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area
 - A description of how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities
 - A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth activities in the local area, including an identification of successful providers of such activities
 - A description of the process used by the local board to provide an opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives of businesses and labor organizations, and input into the development of the local plan, prior to submission of the plan
 - An identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds
 - A description of the competitive process to be used to award the grants and contracts in the local area for activities carried out under this subtitle
 - Such other information as the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board may require

I. STATE VISION AND GOALS

A Plan for the Future

[The following information was excerpted from “A Plan for the Future,” a publication developed by the Arkansas Workforce Development Commission pursuant to Act 803 of 1997, State of Arkansas 81st General Assembly. A copy of this publication, dated March 31, 1998, is included with this plan as Attachment D.]

During the 1997 session of the Arkansas General Assembly, Governor Mike Huckabee and the members of the General Assembly recognized the need to upgrade the Arkansas workforce. The Vocational and Technical Education Division and the State Board of Vocational Education were abolished. The Department of Workforce Education and the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities were created by Act 803 of 1997. In addition, the Workforce

Development Commission was created by this legislation. The Act specified the composition of the commission and set forth the following three purposes:

- Develop a state plan for better delivery of technical education and training in needed skills which shall include moving toward the establishment of at least one area secondary vocational center in each education service cooperative area and in Pulaski County, maximizing the effectiveness of postsecondary vocational and technical education
- Ensure the continuing viability of Vocational Student Organizations (VSOs)
- Energize the private sector as partners in vocational and technical education throughout the state

The commission worked diligently during the summer and fall of 1997 in meeting the objectives of Act 803. This was done through the establishment of a five-member steering committee to assist in coordinating the work; the establishment of three subgroups to direct particular attention toward preschool, K-12, and postsecondary; monthly meetings of the full commission; and several two-day work sessions.

The commission's mission is to develop a comprehensive plan for a workforce development system for the State of Arkansas that will set forth a shared vision and common goals, as well as objectives and timelines for accomplishing the objectives. The plan will include estimated costs to move from a fragmented system to a connected system and will suggest ways to evaluate the system and fine-tune it when and where needed.

The commission's vision is to make Arkansas more competitive in the world economy by eliminating the fragmentation in employment training efforts and creating a coherent, integrated statewide workforce development system designed to develop more fully the academic, occupational, and literacy skills of all segments of the workforce; to ensure that all segments of the workforce will obtain the skills necessary to earn wages sufficient to maintain the highest quality of living in the world; and to promote the economic development of Arkansas by developing a skilled workforce that is responsive to the labor market needs of the businesses in the state.

Many of the objectives of an ideal system are related to the administration of the system. People generally agree that the state is doing some good things in education and training, but are quick to point out that the system is fragmented as evidenced by a lack of communication and coordination among providers. One reason for the fragmentation and the lack of communication and coordination was that there was no central authority to provide the leadership for a coordinated system. *[Note: Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, leadership will be provided by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.]*

Since statehood was achieved in 1836, Arkansas has generally been an agricultural state. It has also been conservative in nature, and after the Civil War it adopted in 1874 a state constitution which was four times as long as the United States Constitution. It was a constitution characterized by some as one that set forth a detailed prohibitive program to keep state government from exercising too much power over the electorate. This constitution was symptomatic of the desire of Arkansas residents to preserve an agrarian and conservative way of

life, a way of life that did not need to place a high value on education for the citizens or the workforce.

Arkansas saw a great deal of change in industrial, agricultural, and population characteristics in the 1940-1954 period. In 1940, the state was still predominantly rural and agricultural. The Arkansas per capita income was only 43 percent of the national average, and more than four times as many people were employed in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as were employed in any other occupational group.

By 1954, agriculture and industry were becoming more nearly balanced, and the transformation from a rural to an urban society was near at hand. While the U.S. Bureau of the Census categorized nearly 78 percent of Arkansas residents as rural dwellers in 1940, that percent had declined to 67 percent by 1950. It was not until 1970 that the population was balanced, with 50 percent regarded as rural and 50 percent as urban dwellers. In 1990, 53.5 percent resided in urban areas.

Even with the increased urbanization of the Arkansas population, economic progress in the last 25 years has not been exceptional. Although there were gains on the national average in per capita income, it was still only 78 percent of the national figure in 1995. The progress of Arkansas toward the national level has been generally stagnant for the past 20 years. The gross state product has more than tripled since the late 1970s, but there has been virtually no gain on the total for the United States.

It is undoubtedly true that more progress was made in Arkansas from the 1960s to now than in any other period in the history of the state, but problems of the past and lower workforce education levels continue to plague efforts by the state to grow and prosper. In a regional economic outlook prepared by DRI/McGraw-Hill in the fourth quarter of 1997, the following strengths of Arkansas were identified:

- Low labor and energy costs
- Low cost of living
- Centrally located and close to several large markets

Unfortunately, weaknesses were expected to offset many of the strengths. The following weaknesses were noted:

- Underdeveloped infrastructure deters business expansion
- Relatively low levels of education inhibit economic growth
- Low per capita income restrains consumer markets

Throughout the United States, businesses are citing increasing problems in recruiting and retaining job-ready workers with relevant skills. This problem was also identified in Arkansas in the "Established Industry Survey," conducted in 1995 by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC). This survey sampled 113 companies operating in Arkansas. When asked, "What are you trying to accomplish today that you are having trouble doing?" the largest proportion (35 percent) identified finding and keeping a trainable workforce. When asked what challenges to growth and expansion they expected, 44.7 percent thought the greatest challenges would be finding and training labor.

The AEDC calculated that only about 4 percent of the workforce in Arkansas in 1995 was in the technology sector. The report also noted that there is a shortage of qualified individuals, pointed out that Arkansas lags behind the rest of the nation in attracting knowledge-based industries, the fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy. These are the industries that depend on educated employees to keep them competitive and to expand their business services.

The National Alliance of Business expects the workforce of 2005 to be older, more balanced by gender, and have more minority representation. In 1992, people between the ages of 16 and 54 represented 88 percent of the American workforce. That proportion is expected to decline to 85.8 percent by 2005. Females made up 45.5 percent of the workforce in 1992, and will reach 47.7 percent by 2005. Finally, while white workers will still make up 82.9 percent of the workforce by 2005, the proportion will be down from 85.5 percent in 1992, with the difference made up by African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and other workers.

Moreover, from 1983 to 1993, jobs requiring more education grew faster than jobs requiring less education. Of all jobs created between 1983 and 1993, 45 percent required some education beyond high school; such jobs represented only 30 percent of the total in 1983. Nearly half of all jobs to be created by 2005 will require education beyond high school, with 58 percent requiring some college.

Arkansas is not in a good position to take advantage of these findings. A comparison of educational attainment by Arkansas residents compared with national averages indicates that although Arkansas is very near the national average of the percent of high school graduates, the state exceeds the nation in the percentage of those who have not completed high school and is below the national average in every educational attainment category beyond high school.

No longer can the state rely on a poorly educated workforce with a strong work ethic that is willing to work for low wages in unskilled jobs. Industries seeking low or unskilled workers that were once recruited to Arkansas to provide jobs are now finding that even lower labor costs are available in countries outside the United States, and they are moving their manufacturing plants to those locations.

Although the Arkansas Constitution of 1874 regarded education as important and provided for a system of free public schools, the schools did not receive stable and reliable funding until nearly the turn of the century. They were operated on a seasonal basis that did not conflict with the need for the young people to work on the farms.

Arkansas recognizes the value of education; but, historically, it has been under-funded compared to national and regional averages. Every calculation of income for individuals, regardless of the basis used, shows that earnings increase for those who have higher levels of education.

An example of such a calculation for March 1996, prepared for the United States Bureau of the Census of median income for people 18 and older by education levels shows that the average high school graduate earned nearly 71 percent more per year than the individual who did not complete high school. Those who completed some college, but did not earn a degree, earned 6.6

percent more than high school graduates; and people who completed an associate degree earned 33.9 percent more than those who completed some college. Holders of bachelor's degrees earned 29.8 percent more than holders of associate degrees. Earning a masters degree added another 37.4 percent, and those with professional or doctoral degrees earned 33.1 percent more than those with master's degrees.

The information on unemployment by education level is as consistent as earnings by education level, but in the opposite direction. The more education an individual receives, the less likely that person is to be unemployed. While 11.7 percent of people without a high school diploma in the Bureau of Census study did not have income, there was a consistent decrease across educational levels to the professional or doctoral degree holders, where less than 1 percent did not have income. These findings lead to the inescapable conclusion that educational investments pay off for individuals and society.

Arkansas successfully changed from a rural/agriculture-based economy to an urban/manufacturing-based economy. Now, it is necessary that it change to a technology/information/service-based economy. If Arkansas is to grow economically and culturally in the future, it is necessary that a workforce be prepared to meet existing and emerging needs. Knowledge-based industries must be attracted to and developed in the state. For that to happen, an educated workforce must be available. We must make our mainstream educational and workforce-preparation system work for all students the first time to reduce investments in costly second-chance systems.

A. Broad Strategic and Economic and Workforce Development Goals for Youth

The vision of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board is to create a globally-recognized workforce in Arkansas—educated, trained, skilled—with the character and work ethic needed to excel in a changing economy. The mission of the board is to establish a unified, flexible, accountable workforce training system implemented through the collaboration of business, industry, labor and citizens, and characterized by accessible and responsive one-stop career development networks. The system will offer employers a resource for workers in existing and emerging occupations and empower Arkansans to receive employment services as well as job-specific training.

Arkansas' broad strategic and economic goals for the youth of the state include creating a comprehensive system with the following features, which each local plan must address:

- All youth will have access to career planning and preparation services.
- All youth will have access to labor market information that is current and accurate.
- All youth will have access to information about Arkansas jobs and the skills required for those jobs.
- All youth will have access to basic skills training to develop the skills necessary to compete for jobs.

- Services will be available across the state, so all youth have access to services regardless of where they live.
- All programs will be locally driven, and each local area will have the authority to implement services according to the needs in the area.
- The system will be cost-effective and accountable to the people.

As Arkansas develops a comprehensive system of employment and training services to serve all the citizens of the state, special attention will be devoted to creating a workforce development system that serves the special needs of Arkansas' youth. The School-to-Work program, which in Arkansas is the Career Opportunities program, will be an integral part of this system. Career Opportunities is a program that offers all interested students and out-of-school youth opportunities for lifelong learning while creating links between education and the world of work.

The goals of the Career Opportunities program include the following:

- Integrating academic and occupational learning
- Integrating the school-to-work model for school-based and work-based learning
- Connecting Career Opportunities program activities with all community development plans, workforce development plans, and economic development plans
- Ensuring that all interested youth have the opportunity to participate in school-based and work-based learning activities
- Including in the Career Opportunities program students from low-income families, low-achieving students, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, students living in rural communities with low population densities, school dropouts, and academically talented students

B. Statewide Workforce Investment System Helping to Attain Strategic Goals for Youth

Over the next five years, Arkansas will develop a common intake and tracking system that will streamline services to youth and others. This system will improve coordination among all service providers and avoid duplication of services. Arkansas' vision is to create a comprehensive year-round system of services to youth from a broad variety of programs to help them achieve academic and employment success. Even though this system will be anchored by the One-Stop system, partners will recruit and serve youth in a variety of locations. Local plans must address how delivery of services will be streamlined and duplication of services will be avoided.

As articulated in the regulations for implementing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the cornerstone of the new workforce investment system is the network of One-Stop service delivery centers that will unify the numerous training, education, and employment programs into a single, customer-friendly system in each community. The underlying notion of One-Stops is the coordination of programs, services, and governance structures so that the customer has access to

a seamless system of workforce investment services. It is envisioned that a variety of programs could use the common intake, case management, and job development systems to take full advantage of the One-Stops' potential for efficiency and effectiveness.

One challenge in creating a One-Stop service delivery system that will live up to its potential is making sure that the state and local workforce investment boards can effectively coordinate and collaborate with the network of service agencies and programs. These include TANF agencies, transportation agencies and providers, metropolitan planning organizations, child-care agencies, nonprofit and community partners, and the broad range of partners who work with youth. One-Stop partners in each local area must develop a system of providing these services that meets the particular needs of the employers and job seekers of that area. This will include providing the complete array of services required in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, as well as additional services recommended by local boards.

A local entity selected by the local workforce investment board to provide Workforce Investment Act Title I services to eligible youth will provide core and intensive services through the One-Stop system, although services may be provided at a variety of physical locations. At a minimum, these services will include outreach, intake, orientation, determining eligibility for specific programs offered by other One-Stop partner agencies, assessment, referral, job search assistance, job placement, career counseling, and follow-up services. Information available at or through the One-Stop system will include labor market statistics and data as well as information about occupations that are in demand, the earnings potential and skill requirements of specific occupations, training providers, the availability of supportive services, financial aid, and unemployment information.

The services and products available through the One-Stop system will be available to all eligible Arkansas youth. These services will include the following:

- Eligibility determination and referral to USDOL-funded training programs, including Workforce Investment Act programs
- Initial eligibility information and referral to programs available within the community other than those funded by USDOL
- Assistance with access to school-to-work programs
- Assistance to employers with school-to-work training plans
- Aptitude testing and assessment for job-training seekers
- Assistance with acquiring job-search skills
- Information on the availability and quality of education and training programs
- Directional assistance for customers to all appropriate staff and/or self services
- Customer-oriented information on careers, labor markets, and jobs
- Information on occupational demand, supply and wages

- Information, materials, equipment, and the necessary assistance to enable job applicants to prepare and distribute job applications and resumes, gain access to information about job openings and requirements, and request referrals to specific jobs
- Ability for employers to list job orders directly
- Assistance for employers in listing job orders or job openings
- Assistance for employers in determining their job skill requirements
- Assistance for employers in reviewing resumes through American's Talent Bank
- Service as the primary local point of contact for employer services
- Assistance in accessing the Arkansas Delta Development project and other projects funded under the National and Community Service Act
- Follow-up to determine program effectiveness for individuals

Youth customers will have access to training and employment information through electronically posted information on Web sites, hardcopy information available in physical One-Stop centers, and one-on-one consultation with career counselors and case managers. Employers will be able to list job orders directly and will be provided assistance in filling those jobs with qualified workers.

Universal access at the One-Stop centers will be assured through strategic planning of site locations (both physical and electronic), appropriate marketing of sites and locations, appropriate staffing levels at the One-Stops, and partners' taking resources to local schools and other facilities. At the One-Stops, at local schools, and at other determined sites, patrons will be given intake forms that list the services available from the One-Stop partner agencies. Partner staff will provide needs assessments and/or screening and will refer patrons to the appropriate service providers. Patrons will be encouraged to use the self-service facilities of the One-Stops, but assistance will be available when needed, and other arrangements will be made as needed. All One-Stop partners will receive the training needed to ensure they are fully capable of performing their new and expanded roles under the One-Stop system of the Workforce Investment Act.

The Wagner-Peyser Act labor exchange services (Title III of the Workforce Investment Act) will also be made available to youth at the One-Stop centers. These labor exchange services are provided by the Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD). Most job orders received by AESD are posted in America's Job Bank (AJB) and are available to youth through the Internet. Youth also have access to AESD employment service interviewers and to locally posted jobs that do not meet Arkansas' standards for posting on AJB. AESD assists with summer youth employment events, and in at least one area, there is a youth employment service that is operated by and for youth, with assistance from the school district and AESD. Local boards will be encouraged to develop and support similar programs in other areas.

Generally, unemployment insurance (UI) services pertain only to older youth. In Arkansas, continued UI claims are handled by phone, and assistance with UI-related problems is available from AESD staff on-site and by phone. Initial claims are taken in person. If the UI staff person is not located in the One-Stop center, the staff of the center will refer youth applicants to the most convenient office to file claims. Claim forms and basic help for filing claims will be available in the One-Stop if no UI staff is present.

AESD also provides a significant amount of labor market information, and this information is available to all Arkansas youth through the One-Stop services systems and the One-Stop partner agencies. This information includes occupational projections, data about employment opportunities and earnings potential of specific occupations and industries, demographic information on the workforce, information about the availability of training courses and the locations of training providers, information and assistance with matching occupational interests to possible careers, and other information helpful to adults and youth alike.

The publication *Arkansas Career Watch* is available at One-Stop centers and is provided through the schools to all high school seniors, and additional copies are given to counselors to distribute at their discretion. The Career Opportunities (School-to-Work) staff of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) contributed to the *Arkansas Career Watch* for the fall 1999 issue, and ADWE is assisting in putting the publication on-line. AESD also offers several products aimed specifically at youth. These two agencies also are collaborating to put the Arkansas Occupational Training Information System (ArkOTIS) on-line. In addition, AESD prepared and distributes *The Future Awaits*, a guide for use in teaching and mentoring youth to prepare for the work force.

With guidance and direction from the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and local workforce investment boards, Arkansas' workforce investment system will help to achieve the goals of the state's education, economic, and welfare delivery systems by coordinating efforts among agencies. This cooperation will assist in making current programs more efficient and accessible. The goal for all youth-oriented programs is to create an educated, competitive workforce and provide the businesses and industries of Arkansas the competitive edge necessary for success in today's global economy. To ensure success in the state's economy, youth will be encouraged to actively participate in the management and decision-making process of designing individual service plans, working with counselors to set goals for achievement that will ensure they will have the skills needed for sustained employment and self-sufficiency as adults.

Work-related experience such as internships, cooperative education, entrepreneurship, and job shadowing will be available to lead the youth of Arkansas into high-skill and high-demand career areas. Mentoring and support services will be provided to enhance and improve the resources and skill-development programs offered by service providers through youth programs. Parents,

businesses, and labor organizations will be actively involved in the process as participants on local youth councils, designing, implementing, and evaluating youth development programs. In establishing a plan for becoming economically self-sufficient adults, youth will participate in the decision-making by setting goals and the action steps necessary to achieve those goals.

All youth will have access to employability skills assessment and training at One Stop Career Centers and other identified sites. Youth with low basic skill levels will have access to computer-basic skills training programs at a multitude of sites, including high school computer labs, community colleges, technical institutes, other existing locations, as well as at One-Stops.

II. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND GOALS

In accordance with Section 136 of the Workforce Investment Act, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and the U.S. Department of Labor will negotiate and reach agreement on the state adjusted levels of performance for the core indicators of performance and customer satisfaction for the first three program years covered by this plan. These negotiations will be conducted and completed during the 90-day approval period between January 1 and April 1, 2000. The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will negotiate with the local workforce investment boards and chief elected officials to reach agreement on local levels of performance based on the state adjusted levels of performance.

The core indicators of performance for youth who are age 14-18 will include the following:

- Attainment of basic skills, work readiness, or occupational skills
- Attainment of secondary school diplomas or recognized equivalents
- Placement and retention in post-secondary education or advanced training, military, unsubsidized employment, or qualified apprenticeships

The core indicators of performance for youth who are age 19-21 will include the following:

- Entry into unsubsidized employment
- 6-months retention in unsubsidized employment
- 6-months earning received in unsubsidized employment
- Attainment of educational or occupational skills credential by youth who enter postsecondary education, advanced training, or unsubsidized employment

Establishment of additional state-mandated measures and goals for local areas may be developed at a later date.

A customer satisfaction performance indicator for participants and employers will be established, and customer satisfaction will be measured through surveys conducted after the conclusion of participation in workforce investment activities. The evaluation instrument for documenting the

progress made by local areas and the specific numerical goals for these indicators will be developed by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. The evaluation instrument will be consistent in every workforce investment area, and metrics will be identical for each area.

Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 states that local levels of performance to be used to measure performance will be negotiated with the governor and chief elected officials. These levels will be used by the local board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent, eligible providers, and the one-stop delivery system.

III. ASSESSMENT

A. Market Analysis

3. Youth Customers of Workforce Investment System

The youth customers of employment and training services in Arkansas are primarily first-time entrants into the labor market seeking information and/or training. Youth who are age 14-21 may be divided into two sub-groups: those who are in secondary and post-secondary schools and those who are out of school. Based on the 1990 census data, the current Arkansas population of this age group is approximately 665,000.

Current information will be available to youth through the one-stop system about the following:

- Current and projected employment opportunities in the local area and in Arkansas
- Job skills necessary to obtain such employment
- Skills and economic development needs of Arkansas, by local areas
- Type and availability of workforce investment activities in each local area of Arkansas

Services to these youth customers through Arkansas' workforce system will be successful only if they also meet the needs of employers. Therefore, employers are to be considered and consulted by the local youth council when addressing and defining needs of the youth customer. More than 50 percent of the members of local workforce investment boards must come from the private business community and represent the employment opportunities of the local areas. Additionally, local board membership includes representatives of local economic development agencies, educators, and service providers. Local boards, working in concert to improve the employment and training opportunities for youth and adults, will solicit input from local employers to ensure that the needs of those employers, and thus the needs of the youth customers, are met.

To improve Arkansas' standard of living, employment and training services will focus on creating a workforce for more high-skill, high-wage jobs. Many good-paying jobs in Arkansas require skills earned through sources other than formal college education, such as apprenticeship

and occupational programs. In the future, an increasing number of jobs will require education beyond high school, both college and non-college training. While many of these jobs do not require formal education beyond high school, they do require continual training, much of which occurs in the workplace. Service providers will work with their youth customers to ensure that they receive the training and support services they need to acquire the skills required for gainful, sustained employment. Service providers will be encouraged to work closely with parents to develop service strategies that will benefit the whole family, encouraging all family members to take advantage of the self-improvement services offered at the One-Stop centers or through the One-Stop partner agencies.

B. STATE READINESS ANALYSIS

1. Leadership

a. State Workforce Investment Board

ii. Organization and Structure of State Workforce Investment Board

Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 established the composition of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. This Act states that the board shall consist of no more than 48 members, of which a majority will represent private business. The Act directs the Governor to consider in his appointments the diverse regions of Arkansas—urban, rural and suburban areas—and mandates that the boards and/or commissions of the state educational economic development agencies be represented. The Act states that the board will consist of the membership described below.

- The Governor of Arkansas
- One member of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House
- One member of the Senate to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore
- One member who is a member of the Women’s Caucus of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the chairperson of the Women’s Caucus
- One member who is a member of the Black Caucus of the General Assembly to be appointed by the chairperson of the Black Caucus;
- The following members to be appointed by the governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate:
 - Representatives of business in Arkansas who:
 - Are owners of businesses, chief executive or operating officers of businesses, and other business executives or employers with policymaking or hiring authority, including members of the local workforce investment boards
 - Represent businesses with employment opportunities reflecting the employment opportunities of Arkansas

- Are appointed from individuals nominated by Arkansas business organizations and business trade associations
- At least one of whom serves on a local workforce investment board
- One chief elected official nominated by the Arkansas Municipal League
- One chief elected official nominated by the Association of Arkansas Counties
- At least three representatives of labor organizations who are nominated by the Arkansas labor federation
- At least three representatives of individuals and organizations who have experience and expertise in the delivery of workforce investment activities of which at least:
 - One person is a chief executive officer of a two-year college nominated by the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges
 - One member is a director of an agency responsible to a local workforce investment board for administrative workforce investment programs, nominated by the Career Development Network Association
 - One member represents community-based organizations

One member who is a person with a disability who is familiar with vocational rehabilitation and either represents an organization of Arkansans with disabilities or represents business and meets the criteria for a business representative above.

- The Director of the Department of Workforce Education
- The Director of the Employment Security Department
- The Director of the Department of Human Services
- The Director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission
- A representative of employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- The Director of the Department of Higher Education
- The Director of the Arkansas Rehabilitative Services

The Act also states that the governor may select one person from any of the following to serve in dual capacity as a member of the Board:

- Arkansas Development Finance Authority
- Arkansas Economic Development Commission
- State Board of Education
- State Board of Workforce Education
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Transitional Employment Assistance Program Advisory Council or their successors

The Act further states that non-legislative members will be appointed for four-year staggered terms, with these terms assigned by lot, and that these terms will begin on June 1 of each year.

Act 1125 of 1999 also establishes an Executive Committee, which meets monthly and is composed of 11-15 members of the state board and sets the following membership requirements:

- The chair and vice-chair of the board, who will also serve as the chair and vice-chair of the Executive Committee
- At least seven business members, at least one of whom serves on a local workforce investment board
- At least two Arkansas labor federation representatives
- At least two members of the General Assembly
- At least one community college representative
- At least one chief elected official

The by-laws of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board are included as Attachment A.

v. State Board Coordination and Interaction With Local WIBs

Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 lists 19 responsibilities of the state Workforce Investment Board, many of which deal with the coordination and interaction with local Workforce Investment Boards. These responsibilities include:

- Development of a state workforce development plan
- Development and continuous improvement of a statewide one-stop system, development of linkages in order to assure coordination and non-duplication among programs and activities, and review of local plans
- Designation of local workforce investment areas
- Development of an allocation formula for the distribution of funds for youth activities to local areas
- Development and continuous improvement of comprehensive state performance measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the workforce investment activities in the state,
- Development of a statewide employment statistics system
- Recommendation of programs which may be consolidated or realigned
- Creation of workforce investment program accountability measures and standards
- Re-evaluation of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Act
- Coordination of state agencies to assist in the development of the state workforce development plan
- Development of additional state workforce development plans every three years
- Establishing procedures that will be taken by entities to assure coordination of and avoid duplication among workforce investment programs

c. Criteria for Appointing Local Board Members

The criteria to be used by chief elected officials in selection of local workforce investment board appointments was approved September 28, 1999, by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board for recommendation to the Governor and were issued by the Governor on September 30 and distributed to each area. A copy of the criteria is included as Attachment B.

d. Allocation Formulas

i. Methods and Factors for Distributing Funds to Local Areas for Youth Programs

The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce investment areas for Title I youth activities under the Workforce Investment Act will be made using the formula described at Section 128(b)(2)(A), as follows:

- 33 1/3 percent of the funds to the local workforce investment areas will be based on the relative number of unemployed individuals, age 14-21, in areas of substantial unemployment compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the state
- 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals, age 14-21, in each workforce investment area compared with the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state
- 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative number of disadvantaged youth, age 14-21, in each workforce investment area compared to the number of disadvantaged youth in the state

To ensure that youth funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision will be applied during the first year of funding. Under this provision, each area will receive no less than 90 percent and no more than 130 percent of the allocation percentage of funds allocated to the local area for the preceding fiscal year. The hold-harmless provision will apply to the first year only (July 1, 2000-June 30, 2001). A decision about applying the hold-harmless provision for the second year of funding will be made before the beginning of the next program year with input from local boards and local elected officials.

iii. Chart Identifying the Formula Allocation to Each Local Area for First Fiscal Year

Charts identifying the formula allocation to each local area for the first fiscal year are included as Attachment C.

e. Competitive and Non-competitive Processes for Awarding Grants and Contracts

Local workforce investment boards will follow standard competitive procurement procedures in awarding grants and contracts. These procedures must be addressed in local plans. Requests for proposals must be issued and the availability of grants and contracts must be advertised in area media outlets.

f. Criteria Used by Local Boards to Award Grants for Youth Activities

Local workforce investment boards will follow standard competitive procurement procedures in awarding grants and contracts. These procedures must be addressed in local plans. Requests for proposals must be issued, and the availability of grants and contracts must be advertised in area media outlets. The local boards will approve grants based on performance and program cost data provided by potential grantees, with guidance to be determined by the state workforce investment board. Previous experience with the potential providers will be considered, and recommendations should be made by the local youth council. The state and local workforce investment boards will gather information regarding performance indicators and will use this information in evaluating the continuous improvement of the grantees and the future awarding of grants and contracts.

g. Definition Regarding Youth Eligibility Criteria

In Section 101(13)(C)(vi) of the Act, the sixth youth eligibility criterion is described as “an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment.” The responsibility for defining this criterion will be delegated to the local areas to be developed by each local workforce investment board with input from its youth council. This criterion must be defined in the local area plan in order to identify effective and ineffective youth activities and providers.

2. Services

b. Current Status of One-Stop implementation and collaboration for WIA Title I, Wagner-Peyser Act, and Other Required and Optional Partners.

The Arkansas One-Stop system is in its third year of development. Funding of this development has been through an implementation grant from the U. S. Department of Labor, which will end November 30, 2000. The Arkansas Career Opportunities Partnership Cabinet (COPC) was established by Governor Mike Huckabee in July of 1997 and charged with the responsibility of leading the one-stop early implementation process. The COPC is made up of the directors of the Arkansas Departments of Employment Security, Workforce Education, General Education,

Higher Education, Economic Development, Human Services, Health, and Information Systems. Its main focus is on one-stop career centers, school-to-work, and welfare-to-work programs.

To coordinate the early one-stop development and implementation process, the COPC created the Arkansas Career System Partnership and selected its staff. Through the Career System Partnership, the COPC awarded the one-stop career center development grants, made decisions on policy issues, and helped refine and support the Arkansas Workforce Investment Act during the 1999 legislative session. Cabinet members also serve on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and/or the Transitional Employment Board.

From the beginning of the one-stop implementation, the effort has been characterized by an increased amount of collaboration and service coordination between the required and optional partners. Prior to passage of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Arkansas' required one-stop partners were as follows:

- Arkansas Employment Security Department—Employment services, JTPA dislocated worker statewide programs under Title III of JTPA, Trade Adjustment, NAFTA/Transitional Adjustment Assistance, Veterans Employment and Training programs, and unemployment insurance
- Arkansas Service Delivery Areas under JTPA—Adult, dislocated worker and youth activities under Titles II and III of JTPA, and Welfare-to-Work
- Title V of the Older Americans Act programs
- Arkansas Department of Human Services—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps Employment and Training, National and Community Service Act program

Each One-Stop was encouraged to include educational institutions as partners. Most, if not all, already include adult education, postsecondary vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation institutions as partners. Some one-stops include higher education institutions and/or private-for-profit businesses as partners. The one-stops that do not already include them, are adding partners from programs funded by Community Services Block Grants and, where such programs exist, HUD employment and training activities, Job Corps centers or recruiters, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker programs, Indian and Native American programs. There are currently no Youth Opportunity Grant recipients in the state.

The One-Stops are addressing youth activities by partnering with various organizations throughout Arkansas. Partner programs currently include, but are not limited to, the JTPA summer and year-round youth programs, local school districts' programs, Career Opportunities (school-to-work) programs, the Job Corps, colleges, and universities. Local youth councils will be charged with developing procedures for ensuring coordination among program providers to avoid duplication of services, and these procedures must be described in the local plans.

C. Assessment of Strengths and Improvement Opportunities

1. Current System's Ability to Meet Customer and Economic Needs

In response to the Workforce Investment Act's mandate to make all employment and training programs accessible through a central location in each area, Arkansas has used implementation funds from the U. S. Department of Labor to begin developing a network of one-stop career centers. Today, Arkansas has approximately 25 One-Stop centers and satellites in operation. These One-Stops are strategically located throughout the state. They are locally designed, customer-focused, and market driven. The aim of the one-stop system is to upgrade customers' workforce skills and eliminate unnecessary duplication. Local workforce investment boards will have the responsibility of selecting One-Stop operators and of overseeing the operation of local One-Stops. The One-Stops of the Career Development Networks are Arkansas' initial customer service delivery system for offering every Arkansan access to the full array of workforce development programs and services.

Some strengths of the current system include the following:

- Arkansas has a committed and hard-working State Workforce Investment Board
- In some areas, the partnerships are strong; in other areas partnerships are becoming stronger through the development process.
- The JTPA service delivery areas have met performance standards consistently, and many have formed stronger partnerships through their welfare-to-work responsibilities.

Some potential weaknesses of the current system include the following:

- A system to capture and measure performance across program lines must be developed.
- Local workforce investment boards are newly created.
- One-Stops in some areas are in the early development stage.

2. Vision for State's Priorities

It is the vision of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board to create an employment and training delivery system that will enable the youth of Arkansas to become educated, informed, skilled adults as they take their places in the workforce in the 21st century. This will be accomplished by providing services to youth on a year-round basis, coordinating existing programs, and adding additional services authorized under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. It is the goal of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board to develop a shared vision among all stakeholders within the workforce investment system. Arkansas will develop a system that is user-friendly to both employers and job seekers.

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

**DEVELOPED BY:
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
PURSUANT TO ACT 803 OF 1997
STATE OF ARKANSAS
81ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
MARCH 31, 1998**

This report represents the work of the Workforce Development Commission pursuant to Act 803 of the 81st Assembly and does not necessarily reflect the views of the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities or the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Members of the Commission	2
Acknowledgments	3
Introduction	4
Workforce Development Commission	5
The Mission	5
The Vision	5
Core Beliefs	5
Leadership Objectives	6
Client Objectives	7
Economic Development and the Workforce	7
Changes in the Workforce	8
The Value of Education	9
Existing Strengths and Weaknesses in the Arkansas Workforce Education System. 11	
Preschool Strengths	12
Preschool Weaknesses	12
K - 12 Strengths	13
K - 12 Weaknesses	15
Postsecondary Delivery System Strengths	16
Postsecondary Delivery System Weaknesses	16
Existing Arkansas Institutions That Provide Workforce Education	17
Secondary Area Vocational Centers in Relation to Education Service Cooperatives	17
Public Two- and Four-Year Institutions and Technical Institutes	18
Recommendations	20
State Leadership	20
State Leadership Recommendations	20
Preschool	21
Preschool Recommendations	22
K - 12	23
K - 12 Recommendations	23
Postsecondary	29
Postsecondary Recommendations	29
Summary	31
Recommendations for Further Study	31
Appendix I – Secondary Area Vocational Centers as of April 2, 1998	
Appendix II – Adult Education Centers and Literacy Councils	
Appendix III – Acronyms	
Appendix IV – References	

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Donald V. Allen	Appointed by the Governor
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Mr. Carl Bayne	Designated by Employment Security Department
Mr. Troy Buck	Public School Teacher – Appointed by the Governor
Representative David Choate	House – Appointed by the Speaker of the House
Mr. Paul Covert	Selected by the AFL-CIO
Ms. Glindal Green	Appointed by the Governor
Ms. Delia Haak	Appointed by the Governor
Dr. Joan Harper	Appointed by the Governor
Ms. Annette Hays	Public School Teacher – Appointed by the Governor
Senator Bill Lewellen	Senate – Appointed by the Black Caucus
Mr. Steve Lux*	Appointed by the Governor
Senator Jodie Mahony	Senate – Appointed by the President Pro Tempore
Ms. Paulette Martin*	Adult Education Representative – Selected by the Arkansas Association of Public Continuing and Adult Education
Ms. Barbara Pardue	Director – Arkansas Economic Development Commission
Representative Carolyn Pollan	House – Appointed by the Women's Caucus
Dr. Jim Rollins*	School Superintendent – Selected by the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators
Mr. Robert Schuchardt	Appointed by the State Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Ray Simon	Director – Arkansas Department of Education
Mr. Bobby Simpson	Director – Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Mr. Doyle Slaten	President – Technical Institute – Selected by Institute Presidents/Directors
Mr. Joel Stubblefield*	President – Two-Year Institution – Selected by Two-Year Institution Presidents/Chancellors
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As the work of the Commission progressed, it became necessary to meet with specialists in order to gain an understanding of the various roles in the system. The Commission members wish to thank the following resource people who provided valuable assistance in the development of the plan:

Mr. Collins Andrew	Executive Vice President, Alltel Information Systems
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Ms. Glenda Bean	Director, Early Childhood Commission
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Mr. Ron Russell	Executive Vice President, State Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Ashvin Vibhakar	Director, Institute for Economic Advancement, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Mr. Michael Watson	Director, Murphy Commission

INTRODUCTION

During the 1997 session of the Arkansas General Assembly, Governor Mike Huckabee and the members of the General Assembly recognized the need to upgrade the Arkansas workforce. The Vocational and Technical Education Division and the State Board of Vocational Education were abolished. The Department of Workforce Education and the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities were created by Act 803 of 1997. In addition, the Workforce Development Commission was created by this legislation. The Act specified the composition of the Commission and set forth the following three purposes:

- > Develop a state plan for better delivery of technical education and training in needed skills which shall include moving toward the establishment of at least one area secondary vocational center in each education service cooperative area and in Pulaski County, and for maximizing the effectiveness of postsecondary vocational and technical education
- > Ensure the continuing viability of Vocational Student Organizations (VSOs)
- > Energize the private sector as partners in vocational and technical education throughout the state

The Commission included 24 members selected as specified in the Act. They included 7 business, industry, and labor representatives; 2 members of the Arkansas Senate; 2 members of the Arkansas House of Representatives; 2 public school teachers; 1 member of the General Assembly appointed by the Black Caucus; 1 member of the General Assembly appointed by the Women's Caucus; 1 president or chancellor representing two-year institutions of higher learning; 1 president or chancellor representing four-year institutions of higher learning; 1 technical institute president or director; 1 person representing adult education; 1 local school district superintendent; and the directors of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Employment Security Department, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and Arkansas Department of Education. In addition, care was taken to assure that female and minority members were included on the Commission.

The Governor established the Arkansas Career Opportunities Partnership Cabinet (COPC), which will govern the state's full-service employment, career development, and training systems and will connect educational programs with employment demands. COPC members are as follows:

- > Dr. Stephen Franks, Director, Department of Workforce Education
- > Dr. Lee Frazier, Director, Department of Human Services
- > Mr. Lu Hardin, Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- > Mr. Michael Hipp, Director, Department of Information Services
- > Dr. Sandra Nichols, Director, Department of Health
- > Ms. Barbara Pardue, Director, Arkansas Economic Development Commission
- > Mr. Ed Rolle, Director, Employment Security Department
- > Mr. Ray Simon, Director, Department of Education

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Commission worked diligently during the summer and fall of 1997 in meeting the objectives of Act 803. This was done through the establishment of a five-member steering committee to assist in coordinating the work; the establishment of three subgroups to direct particular attention toward preschool, K - 12, and postsecondary; monthly meetings of the full Commission; and several two-day work sessions.

— The Mission —

The first effort of the Commission was to establish a clear and concise statement of the mission it was to perform. The following mission statement was developed:

To develop a comprehensive plan for a workforce development system for the State of Arkansas that will set forth a shared vision and common goals, as well as objectives and timelines for accomplishing the objectives. The plan will include estimated costs to move from a fragmented system to a connected system, and will suggest ways to evaluate the system and fine tune it when and where needed.

The Commission established an overall vision to guide its work and agreed on core beliefs, leadership objectives, and client objectives. These guiding principles are shown in the following subsections.

— The Vision —

The Commission's vision is:

To make Arkansas more competitive in the world economy by eliminating the fragmentation in employment training efforts and creating a coherent, integrated statewide workforce development system designed to develop more fully the academic, occupational, and literacy skills of all segments of the workforce; to ensure that all segments of the workforce will obtain the skills necessary to earn wages sufficient to maintain the highest quality of living in the world; and to promote the economic development of Arkansas by developing a skilled workforce that is responsive to the labor market needs of the businesses in the state.

— Core Beliefs —

- > Learning is lifelong and begins before kindergarten and continues throughout the lifetime of an individual.
- > Respect for the worth of every individual is a core value of the system.
- > The ideal system is responsive to the diversity of the population and to persons with special needs.
- > Progress is achieved only through a comprehensive, coherent system characterized by flexible, responsive partnerships among all agencies, institutions, governing entities, and industries.
- > Foundational workforce skills will meet an established standard of cognitive skills that incorporates critical thinking, reading comprehension, and quantitative concepts.

- > Access to quality education and workforce preparation is readily available to all citizens.
- > Strong, responsive, visionary leadership drives the system.
- > Accountability is achieved through timely evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the system as measured by established performance criteria and return on the public investment.

Leadership Objectives

Many of the objectives of an ideal system are related to the administration of the system. People generally agree that the state is doing some good things in education and training, but are quick to point out that the system is fragmented as evidenced by a lack of communication and coordination among providers. One reason for the fragmentation and the lack of communication and coordination is that there is no central authority to provide the leadership for a coordinated system.

The Commission members recognize that there must be a coordinated effort in order to maximize funds and minimize duplication of workforce development programs.

This coordinated effort would provide a framework for the following:

- > Common policy development
- > Common performance management
- > Common management information system
- > Integrated capacity building
- > Coordinated fiscal operations
- > Coordinated and integrated service delivery
- > Response to environmental variables such as changes in federal and state policies, economic conditions, social trends, and statewide goals and benchmarks
- > Elimination of duplication or redundancy of effort through cooperation, collaboration, and assistance within the system
- > Coordination of all public occupational-specific training, such as firefighting and law enforcement, as well as training provided through private proprietary institutions
- > Operation of a labor market information system that provides managers, planners, and policy makers with accurate supply, demand, and related data which facilitates aligning programs with quality employment needs
- > Development of a comprehensive yearly accountability report on workforce education (trends, accomplishments, return on investment, future needs, and a report on the use of the corporate tax increase)
- > Development of a comprehensive research and development program for the state workforce development system

Client Objectives

The Commission enumerated the objectives of an ideal system in providing opportunities for all citizens to meet the challenges of a changing workplace. The ideal system would:

- > Provide opportunities for individuals throughout their lives to enter and exit educational programs essential for competence in the workforce
- > Provide clearly marked alternate paths enabling all persons to move from one level of preparation to another with ease
- > Include seamless transitions for easy navigation of the system by all clients and customers
- > Clarify the skills needed in the workforce and provide competency-based instruction and credentialed training that meet employer performance requirements in a timely manner
- > Reduce or eliminate all barriers to participation and be affordable for all citizens
- > Provide career counseling and training that build lifetime capacity for individuals to manage their placement into high-quality jobs leading to an improved lifestyle and community involvement

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORKFORCE

Since statehood was achieved in 1836, Arkansas has generally been an agricultural state. It has also been conservative in nature, and after the Civil War it adopted in 1874 a state constitution which was four times as long as the United States Constitution. It was a constitution that "set forth a detailed prohibitive program to keep state government from exercising too much power over the electorate" (Fouse & Granade, 1978, p. 127). This constitution was symptomatic of the desire of Arkansas residents to preserve an agrarian and conservative way of life – a way of life that did not need to place a high value on education for the citizens or the workforce.

Arkansas saw a great deal of change in industrial, agricultural, and population characteristics in the 1940-1954 period. In 1940, the state was still predominantly rural and agricultural. The Arkansas per capita income was only 43 percent of the national average; and more than four times as many people were employed in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as were employed in any other occupational group (Drummond, 1978, p. 175).

By 1954, "Agriculture and industry were becoming more nearly balanced, and the transformation from a rural to an urban society was near at hand" (Drummond, 1978, p. 185). While the U.S. Bureau of the Census categorized nearly 78 percent of Arkansas residents as rural dwellers in 1940, that percent had declined to 67 percent by 1950. It was not until 1970 that the population was balanced, with 50 percent regarded as rural and 50 percent as urban dwellers. In 1990, 53.5 percent resided in urban areas.

Even with the increased urbanization of the Arkansas population, economic progress in the last 25 years has not been exceptional. Although there were gains on the national average in per capita income, it was still only 78 percent of the national figure in 1995. Venus and Hoover (1997) pointed out that the progress of Arkansas toward the national level has been generally stagnant for the past 20 years. "Arkansas fared better in relative employment growth than it did in relative income growth ... because the growth that did take place was less concentrated in higher income sectors" (p. 19). The gross state product has more than tripled since the late 1970s, but there has been virtually no gain on the total for the United States. Arkansas had 0.75 percent of the total in 1977 and 0.74 percent in 1995.

It is undoubtedly true that more progress was made in Arkansas from the 1960s to now than in any other period in the history of the state, but problems of the past and lower workforce education levels continue to plague efforts by the state to grow and prosper. In a regional economic outlook prepared by DRI/McGraw-Hill in the fourth quarter of 1997, the following strengths of Arkansas were identified:

- > Low labor and energy costs
- > Low cost of living
- > Centrally located and close to several large markets

Unfortunately, weaknesses were expected to offset many of the strengths. The following weaknesses were noted:

- > Underdeveloped infrastructure deters business expansion
- > Relatively low levels of education inhibit economic growth
- > Low per capita income restrains consumer markets

Source: (<http://www.dri.mcgraw-hill.com/regional/arkansas.htm>)

The 1998 Karlson & Shelnutt outlook for the Arkansas economy noted, "Similar to last quarter, the current projection for the state is one of slow but stable growth through the year 2001 ... Restraining economic growth will be tight labor markets and a slowdown in manufacturing, especially in labor-intensive industries and trade-sensitive sectors" (p. 4). Wyss (1998) expects the strongest employment growth through the year 2002 to be in the western states (p. 17).

CHANGES IN THE WORKFORCE

Throughout the United States, businesses are citing increasing problems in recruiting and retaining job-ready workers with relevant skills. This problem was also identified in Arkansas in the "Established Industry Survey," conducted in 1995 by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC). This survey sampled 113 companies operating in Arkansas. When asked, "What are you trying to accomplish today that you are having trouble doing?" the largest proportion (35 percent) identified finding and keeping a trainable workforce. When asked what challenges to growth and expansion they expected, 44.7 percent thought the greatest challenges would be finding and training labor.

Business publications in Arkansas have also taken notice of the need for skilled workers. John Henry (1998), writing in *Arkansas Business*, said, "All across Arkansas, high-tech industry is begging for workers. There are plenty of openings and the pay is good" (p. 1). The article went on to suggest that this is a national problem that "will cause cutbacks in projects, new products will be delayed, and expansion plans may be put on hold" (p. 22).

The AEDC calculated that only about four percent of the workforce in Arkansas in 1995 was in the technology sector. Henry, in addition to noting that there is a shortage of qualified individuals, pointed out that Arkansas "lags behind the rest of the nation in attracting knowledge-based industries – the fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy" (p. 1). These are the industries that depend on educated employees to keep them competitive and to expand their business services.

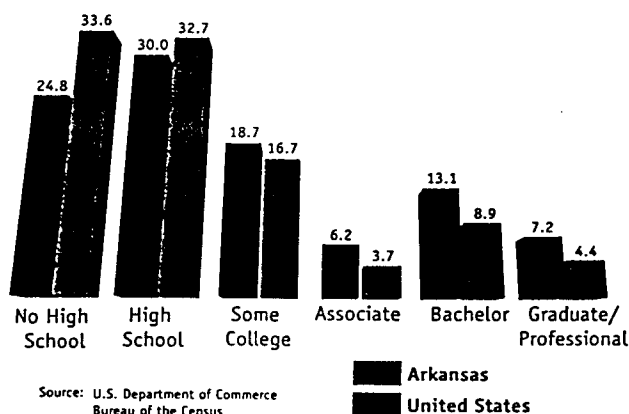
The National Alliance of Business (1996) expects the workforce of 2005 to be older, more balanced by gender, and have more minority representation. In 1992, people between the ages of 16 and 54

represented 88 percent of the American workforce. That proportion is expected to decline to 85.8 percent by 2005. Females made up 45.5 percent of the workforce in 1992, and will reach 47.7 percent by 2005. Finally, while white workers will still make up 82.9 percent of the workforce by 2005; the proportion will be down from 85.5 percent in 1992, with the difference made up by African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and other workers.

Moreover, "from 1983 to 1993, jobs requiring more education grew faster than jobs requiring less education. Of all jobs created between 1983 and 1993, 45 percent required some education beyond high school; such jobs represented only 30 percent of the total in 1983. Nearly half of all jobs to be created by 2005 will require education beyond high school, with 58 percent requiring some college" (National Alliance of Business, 1996, p. 645).

Arkansas is not in a good position to take advantage of these findings. Figure 1 shows a comparison of educational attainment by Arkansas residents compared with national averages. Although very near the national average of the percent of high school graduates, Arkansas exceeds the nation in the percentage of those who have not completed high school and is below the national average in every educational attainment category beyond high school.

Figure 1: Percent of Persons 25 Years and Over by Levels of Educational Attainment: United States and Arkansas, 1990



No longer can the state rely on a poorly educated workforce with a strong work ethic that is willing to work for low wages in unskilled jobs. Industries seeking low or unskilled workers that were once recruited to Arkansas to provide jobs are now finding that even lower labor costs are available in countries outside the United States, and they are moving their manufacturing plants to those locations.

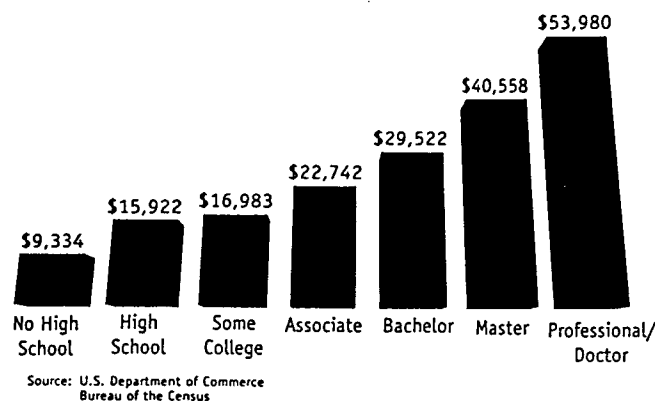
—THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Although the Arkansas Constitution of 1874 regarded education as important and provided for a system of free public schools, the schools did not receive stable and reliable funding until nearly the turn of the century. They were operated on a seasonal basis that did not conflict with the need for the young people to work on the farms. As early as 1904, a report by the superintendent of public instruction summed up an educational system that was already struggling in competition with other states: "In the cause of education we stand at the bottom, or dangerously near, no matter how the states are grouped or classified in respect to the length of school terms, the amount expended per pupil, average daily attendance, in salaries paid, and in providing them means of training teachers." (Lisenby, 1978, p. 143).

Arkansas recognizes the value of education; but, historically, it has been underfunded compared to national and regional averages. Every calculation of income for individuals, regardless of the basis used, shows that earnings increase for those who have higher levels of education.

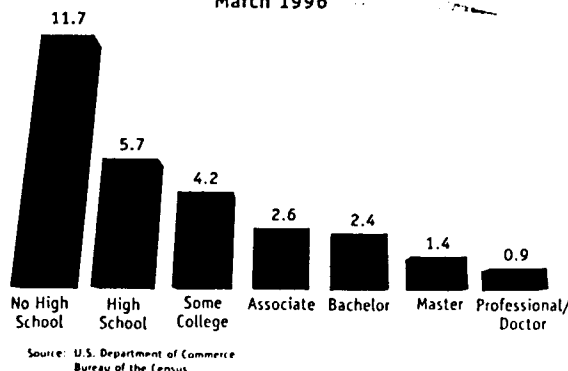
An example of such a calculation for March 1996, prepared for the United States Bureau of the Census of median income for people 18 and older by education levels, is shown in Figure 2. This figure shows that the average high school graduate earned nearly 71 percent more per year than the individual who did not complete high school. Those who completed some college, but did not earn a degree, earned 6.6 percent more than high school graduates; and people who completed an associate degree earned 33.9 percent more than those who completed some college. Holders of bachelor's degrees earned 29.8 percent more than holders of associate degrees. Earning a master's degree added another 37.4 percent, and those with professional or doctoral degrees earned 33.1 percent more than those with master's degrees.

Figure 2: Median Income by Educational Attainment for Persons 18 Years of Age and Older; United States, March 1996



The information on unemployment by education level is as consistent as earnings by education level, but in the opposite direction. The more education an individual receives, the less likely that person is to be unemployed. Although it may not represent true unemployment rates, Figure 3 shows the percent of people at different education levels who did not have income in March 1996. While 11.7 percent of people without a high school diploma did not have income, there was a consistent decrease across educational levels to the professional or doctoral degree holders, where less than 1 percent did not have income. These findings lead to the inescapable conclusion that educational investments pay off for individuals and society.

Figure 3: Percent of Persons 18 Years of Age and Older Without Income by Educational Attainment; United States, March 1996



To provide an indication of where Arkansas stands relative to other states, Table 1 shows the median household income of the 10 highest and lowest states, excluding Arkansas, with the median percent of the population in those states with any type of education beyond high school. Arkansas is below the median of the 10 lowest states in both median household income and the percent with education beyond high school.

Table 1: Median Household Income and the Percent of Population With Education Beyond High School; The 10 Highest States, 10 Lowest States, and Arkansas, 1990

Category	Median Household Income	Median Percent With Education Beyond HS
10 Highest States	\$40,831	50.3
10 Lowest States	\$27,148	38.1
Arkansas	\$25,814	33.6

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

These figures show that people have higher earnings with higher levels of education and that they are less likely to be unemployed. In addition, the figures show that Arkansas does not compare favorably with other states in either median household income or the percent of people with education beyond high school.

Arkansas successfully changed from a rural/agriculture-based economy to an urban/manufacturing-based economy. Now, it is necessary that it change to a technology/information/service-based economy. If Arkansas is to grow economically and culturally in the future, it is necessary that a workforce be prepared to meet existing and emerging needs. Knowledge-based industries must be attracted to and developed in the state; and in order for that to happen, an educated workforce must be available. We must make our mainstream educational and workforce-preparation system work for all students the first time to reduce investments in costly second-chance systems.

EXISTING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN THE ARKANSAS WORKFORCE— EDUCATION SYSTEM

Where one must begin when attempting to develop the workforce of a state or nation can be a subject for disagreement, but the Workforce Development Commission recognized that such development is not a short-term or temporary task. Rather, it is a task that must be all encompassing; it must be continuous; and it must embrace a view to the future. When considering the extent to which the needed skill levels of the workforce have expanded in only the last few years, it is now nearly impossible to imagine what might be required in the future. It is simply not wise to eliminate any level of education from the mix when considering the long-term effort to develop the workforce of America, or the workforce of Arkansas, to meet future needs. Learning extends from early childhood throughout life. Even after completing formal schooling, successful workers of the future will need to upgrade their skills and abilities throughout their lifetimes of work.

Some of the recommendations included herein can be addressed in the near future, but some are long term in their implementation and in the realization of results. Some may even have to await changes in federal or state laws and policies. Many of them will require coordinated and cooperative efforts between the Department of Workforce Education (DWE) and other state agencies or organizations. Although these recommendations are ambitious, consideration of them must begin now if they are to be achieved at some time in the future.

The Workforce Development Commission divided itself into three subgroups to consider different levels of education. The three subgroups were preschool, K - 12, and postsecondary. Each group identified the strengths and weaknesses observed as now existing in Arkansas. Those strengths and weaknesses are listed below.

Preschool Strengths

- > Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)
- > Head Start

Arkansas currently receives approximately \$35 million on an 80/20 matching basis from the federal government for Head Start programs. These funds serve about 9,500 or approximately nine percent of the children ages three through five. In addition, the Migrant Head Start programs serve an additional 355 children from birth through age five. Early Head Start currently serves 264 children from birth through age three.

- > Early Childhood Commission and staff
- > Federal matching funds of \$28 million annually for child care
- > Family decisions involving preschool development
- > Child care centers in public school districts
- > Child care centers provided and supported by some corporations and hospitals
- > Corporate subsidies provided in some cases for employee child care
- > Arkansas Better Chance (ABC), with the state providing \$10 million on a 60/40 matching basis, serving 8,500 children
- > AEDC providing \$1 million per year in grants for child care centers
- > In the past three years, the number of state-approved child care centers increasing from 22 to over 300

Preschool Weaknesses

- > Families lack information to effectively prepare children for kindergarten.
- > Affordable child care centers do not exist in many areas of the state.
- > Fragmentation results from a lack of articulation and coordination among providers of child care and among agencies providing services.

- > Although some companies do participate, there is a general lack of corporate involvement.
- > There is inadequate funding in some areas.
- > Many child care centers do not have a strong learning-readiness educational component.
- > There are no financial and professional incentives for child care workers to acquire additional training.
- > Quality child care is not accessible.
- > Low income families have a very difficult time affording child care.
- > Workers in child care centers are low paid.
- > Child care centers lack adequate staff development.
- > The placement of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) in the Department of Human Services (DHS) carries a welfare connotation.
- > Head Start and child care center activities are not coordinated with activities needed to prepare children for kindergarten.
- > In most cases, Head Start is only offered for children 3 - 5 years of age.
- > In most cases, Head Start operates only nine months per year.
- > Public schools are reluctant to establish positive working relationships with child care centers.

K-12 Strengths

With the interdependency of workforce education and general education, the Commission found the following strengths that positively impact both systems:

- > The education of all children is mandated.
- > Education has experienced improved funding over time.
- > Local school districts have a uniform minimal tax rate for maintenance and operation purposes.
- > School funding targets revenues for the special-needs population.
- > Incentives are provided for program development, teacher training, and the elevation of student achievement.
- > Incentives are provided for advanced placement opportunities for all students.
- > Incentives are provided for start-up programming of workforce education courses.

- > The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program assists young students as they enter school so that they are ready to learn.
- > Some remediation models are provided in the early grades to help students reach grade level as soon as possible.
- > Overall performance indicators are monitored, and an annual school report card is published.
- > Arkansas has one of the lowest pupil-teacher ratios in the country.
- > Alternative education is provided to help some students with social and academic problems.
- > The DWE has developed content standards and assessments that connect to the standards and has provided teachers staff development on the new standards.
- > In many schools, career exploration is currently offered to students in grades 7 and 8, along with interest inventories and assessment of individual abilities and strengths.
- > A workplace-readiness course is currently offered in grades 10 - 12 in response to the requirements that employers have indicated are essential for employment.
- > The state has a model for career planning that is recognized nationally and which could be used by schools in implementing their career action plans.
- > For the past six years, the Carl Perkins vocational federal funds have been used by local schools primarily for program improvement activities that have added advanced technology to all occupational areas through staff development, curriculum, software, and equipment. In addition, the funds have been used to provide the majority of vocational teachers statewide with an updated computer system and training for use in their classrooms and to provide many counselors with a computer system for student records and career planning.
- > The DWE has designed, developed, and implemented 14 model projects using Carl Perkins federal funds to connect secondary and postsecondary education. Those projects have resulted in alignment of curriculum and articulation of credit from secondary to postsecondary.
- > The DWE joined with other states and organizations to develop models for improving student expectations and achievement. The partnerships include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - >> The High Schools That Work effort through the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), is an excellent model to improve student achievement through more rigorous academic and technical programs
 - >> Vocational Technical Education Consortium of States (V-TECS) in the development of career majors
 - >> National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) in the development of models and technical support for the integration of academic and vocational education
 - >> Jobs for the Future and other programs to develop the essential elements and design principles for the state's youth apprenticeship/work-based learning programs

>> American/Arkansas Institute of Banking to improve the banking and finance programs

K - 12 Weaknesses

The Commission has studied in depth the areas needed for improvement. The interdependent nature of workforce education and general education requires that those identified weaknesses be viewed holistically, because a weakness in one area may well impact the program effectiveness in another area.

- > The K - 12 public school system is underfunded. The current expenditure base of just over \$4,000 per child is among the lowest in the country.
- > Current funding is not adequate to support the cost-intensive instructional equipment of laboratories required for all quality workforce education programs nor to support the cost of equipment for laboratory-based academic core subjects.
- > School organizations and use of resources do not always reflect efforts to enable all students to achieve the defined performance standards as measured on the benchmark examinations for grades 4, 8, 11, and 12. For example, a central goal of K - 4 should be to have all students meet the performance standards in reading and mathematics; for 5 - 8, to have all students ready to do "real" high school-level work; and, for 9 - 12, to significantly improve the levels of student achievement in core subject areas.
- > Without a more concerted effort to plan to go forward together by the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and DWE, the perception of fragmentation between general education and workforce education will continue to grow.
- > New organizational initiatives, such as middle level education, are not appropriately supported.
- > Clear and definitive articulation between the K - 12 system and preschool and postsecondary school providers does not exist.
- > Schools are not organized in such a way that parent, patron, and business partnerships and involvement are encouraged.
- > There is a lack of agreement on the definition of grade-level standards for K - 12, which promotes a lack of focus and depth of instructional delivery.
- > Large numbers of students are moved from one grade level to the next and are graduated from the public schools with inadequate reading and mathematics skills.
- > Students are not required by the core curriculum to have an appropriate math course each year they are in school.
- > Opportunities for the application of learning are not sufficiently emphasized.
- > Academic rigor across the curriculum in both general education and vocational education is lacking.
- > Although recent legislation will substantially assist in the improvement of the student achievement assessments, the instructional delivery system does not align with the assessment performance expectations.

- > Educational planning and programming are not as personalized as they need to be. One size does not fit all.
- > Current feedback mechanisms on the preparedness of graduates to enter the workplace and continued education are insufficient.
- > The academic and personal development benefits to students as members of VSOs are often limited to a select few.
- > Systematic, ongoing training and retraining of teachers are not in place.
- > Colleges and universities have not worked closely with public schools to ensure that preservice teachers are well prepared.
- > Staff development initiatives such as the Arkansas Systemic Initiative, the Math Crusade, the Science Crusade, advanced placement training, etc. are limited in scale and opportunity.

—Postsecondary Delivery System Strengths—

- > The existing delivery system for postsecondary workforce development has a good statewide distribution of postsecondary institutions to potentially deliver workforce education.
- > The existing delivery system includes many model programs which can be replicated in other areas of the state.

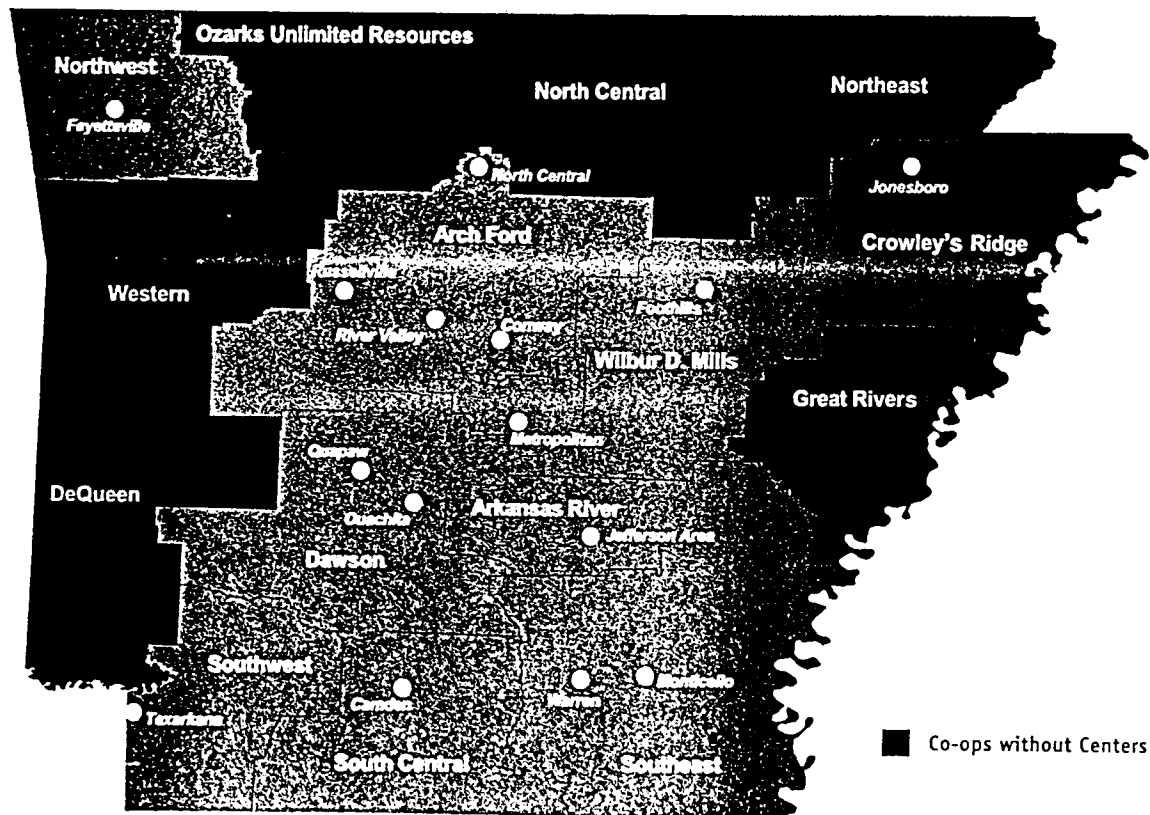
—Postsecondary Delivery System Weaknesses—

- > Fragmentation of and duplication within delivery systems lead to poor statewide utilization of resources.
- > The existing two-year institutions lack a primary mission which includes workforce development.
- > There is no uniform system for developing and monitoring accountability to meet performance standards.
- > The individual institutions and agencies do not have a clearly defined role and scope.
- > There are limited active partnerships between business and education.
- > Marketing does not exist among educational providers, businesses, and industries.

EXISTING ARKANSAS INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE WORKFORCE EDUCATION

The following maps show the location of the current institutions which provide workforce education in Arkansas. The first map shows the boundaries of the education service cooperatives and the location of the secondary area vocational centers. The second map shows the location of the public two- and four-year institutions, the technical institutes, and the comprehensive lifelong learning center and includes an alphabetical listing by county.

Secondary Area Vocational Centers in Relation to Education Service Cooperatives



Secondary Area Vocational Centers

Area Vocational Center at Jonesboro
Area Vocational Center at Russellville
Camden Area Center at Camden
Conway Area Center at Conway
Fayetteville Vocational Center at Searcy
Jefferson Area Vocational Center at Pine Bluff
Metropolitan Area Vocational Center at Little Rock
Monticello Occupational Educational Center at Monticello
North Central Vocational Center at Texhe
Ozark Area Vocational Center at Malvern
Quincy Vocational Center at Hot Springs
River Valley Vocational Center at Maudlin
South Central Area Vocational Center at Waco
Texarkana Area Vocational Center at Texarkana
Western Area Vocational Center at Fayetteville

A map of Arkansas showing its 77 counties. Each county is labeled with its name. Symbols are used to indicate specific locations: a solid black circle for the capital (Little Rock), a solid black square for the state seat (Fayetteville), and a solid black triangle for other locations. The map also shows the state's irregular border with the Mississippi River to the east and the Texas border to the south and west.

- Public Two - Year Institute
- ▲ Public Four - Year Institute
- Technical Institute

<i>County</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Arkansas	Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, DeWitt Branch
Arkansas	Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, Stuttgart Branch
Baxter	Arkansas State University-Mountain Home
Benton	Northwest Arkansas Community College
Boone	North Arkansas College
Conway	Petit Jean College
Crittenden	Mid-South Community College
Garland	Garland County Community College
Hempstead	University of Arkansas Community College at Hope
Hot Spring	Ouachita Technical College
Independence	Gateway Technical College
Izard	Ozarka Technical College

Jackson	Arkansas State University-Newport
Jefferson	Southeast Arkansas Technical College
Mississippi	Mississippi County Community College
Ouachita	Southern Arkansas University-Technical Branch
Phillips	Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas
Polk	Rich Mountain Community College
Pulaski	Pulaski Technical College
Randolph	Black River Technical College
St. Francis	East Arkansas Community College
Sebastian	Westark College
Sevier	Cossatot Technical College
Union	South Arkansas Community College
White	Arkansas State University-Beebe

Public Four-Year Institutions

<i>County</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Clark	Henderson State University
Columbia	Southern Arkansas University-Magnolia
Craighead	Arkansas State University-Jonesboro
Drew	University of Arkansas-Monticello
Faulkner	University of Central Arkansas
Jefferson	University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Pope	Arkansas Tech University
Pulaski	University of Arkansas-Little Rock
Pulaski	University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
Washington	University of Arkansas-Fayetteville

Technical Institutes

<i>County</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Ashley	Forest Echoes Technical Institute, Crossett
Craighead	Delta Technical Institute, Jonesboro Branch
Desha	Great Rivers Vocational Technical School, McGehee
Franklin	Arkansas Valley Technical Institute, Ozark
Garland	Quapaw Technical Institute, Hot Springs
Greene	Cotton Boll Technical Institute, Paragould Branch
Jefferson	Riverside Vocational Technical School, Pine Bluff Branch
Jefferson	Riverside Vocational Technical School, Tucker Branch
Lincoln	Riverside Vocational Technical School, Grady
Mississippi	Cotton Boll Technical Institute, Burdette
Poinsett	Delta Technical Institute, Marked Tree
Pulaski	Riverside Vocational Technical School, Wrightsville Branch
St. Francis	Crowley's Ridge Technical Institute, Forrest City
Washington	Northwest Technical Institute, Springdale
White	Foothills Technical Institute, Searcy

RECOMMENDATIONS

State Leadership

The mission statement for this plan calls for comprehensive and coordinated efforts to provide a workforce that meets existing and future needs in Arkansas. Only through strong leadership and cooperative efforts can such goals be met.

Although there are a number of state agencies, educational institutions, and businesses which have roles and obligations to develop a strong and capable workforce for Arkansas, specific goals must be established with responsible leadership identified.

State Leadership Recommendations

Some of these recommendations can be given attention and implemented in the near future. Others will be longer term in their implementation, since they may require changes in existing laws or regulations or require funding not now available.

- 1- 1. All agencies involved in workforce development should coordinate their activities to maximize funds and minimize duplication.

Such coordination should be achieved by the agencies' participation in the Career Opportunities Partnership Cabinet (COPC) under the leadership of the DWE or any other agency designated by the Governor.

- 1- 2. An annual Governor's Workforce Summit should be established to evaluate results and identify best practices in workforce education.
- 1- 3. The Communications Office within the DWE should be expanded to work with all partners to tell the story of workforce development and to market it to business and industry, parents, and students.
- 1- 4. Regional business/education alliances should be established to provide a programmatic decision framework at the local level.

The regional alliances should include active participation by business and industry – which should compose the voting majority of the alliances – education, and other adult service providers in both credit and noncredit curriculum development.

The existing education cooperative district boundaries should be used to define primary service areas, but flexibility should be allowed within and across those boundaries. These business/education alliances should be charged with the responsibility of establishing priorities based on workforce development needs and for planning the delivery and accountability of programs.

Needs assessment should be done at the regional level, and information from these assessments used not only within the regions but also at the state level to determine the overall direction of the state in future workforce development. A statewide network or system to meet the ongoing educational and retraining needs of the existing, emerging, and transitional workforces should be established, based on information gained from the regional needs assessment process.

The existing, emerging, and transitional workforces are defined as follows:

- > Existing – the segment of the workforce that is currently employed and needs ongoing training/upgrading to meet the demands of changing technology.
 - > Emerging – the segment of the workforce that is currently in preparation through the K - 12 system and formal postsecondary education.
 - > Transitional – the segment of the workforce that is experiencing a change in status, for example, disabled workers preparing to enter the workforce, dislocated workers retraining for new jobs, or persons transitioning from welfare to work.
- 1- 5. A reporting system should be developed and implemented which utilizes uniform criteria, thereby permitting comparative analysis and return-on-investment studies as a part of the annual report of workforce development progress produced and coordinated by the DWE.
 - 1- 6. A labor market information system should operate and provide managers, planners, and policy makers with accurate supply, demand, and related data to facilitate alignment of workforce education offerings with the employment needs.
 - 1- 7. Funding should be provided to coordinate the development of a statewide management information system that simplifies the burden of data collection and allows for comparative analyses, such as return on business investment or statistical information across the spectrum of providers. This management system should provide follow-up data on high school graduates from employers and institutions of higher education.
 - 1- 8. Self-correcting accountability measures should be utilized to assure that workforce development goals are being addressed.

— *Preschool* —

In the ideal system, every child would enter kindergarten with the basic skills necessary to begin the formal educational journey as a lifelong learner. Two particular issues related to preschool education emerged in the considerations of the Commission. These issues were adequate quality child care and preparation for kindergarten. Many people fail to recognize the importance of early childhood development as a foundation for lifelong learning.

In regard to workforce education, the Commission based its preschool work on the following considerations:

- > Inasmuch as over 80 percent of learning takes place before kindergarten, preschool is the foundation for workforce education.
- > Every child should have the best possible start in life by having nutritional guidance and medical care available to all mothers during pregnancy.
- > The family is the primary influence on the child's preschool development and is of vital importance in modeling and establishing the foundation of the child's attitude toward lifelong learning, including developing a positive and strong work ethic. Parenting classes provide an opportunity for parents to learn and share experiences.

- > Regular reading to the preschooler is an integral part of nurturing and preparation for lifelong learning.

The Commission recognizes that the family is the foundation of education. Unfortunately, there are children in Arkansas and throughout the United States who live in homes where education is not a high priority. This situation may exist because the parents do not realize the advantages of education, or it may be that resources are simply not available in those homes to instill within children the desire to learn and expand their minds.

When children start school with achievement deficiencies that result from inadequacies in early childhood, the evidence shows such deficiencies are seldom erased by the time these children graduate from high school. Children who do not receive the appropriate guidance in their early years will lack readiness to enter kindergarten and will again start the cycle of a generation of people unprepared to take their proper places as productive members of the workforce.

Another consideration is that the demand for quality child care can be expected to increase. As indicated in an earlier section, the workforce is expected to move toward a 50/50 balance between males and females. In addition, public policy may begin moving mothers and fathers who are receiving welfare to part-time and/or full-time employment. If these individuals are to become a part of the workforce, affordable and safe care for their children must be available.

Preschool Recommendations

- 2- 1. Public service announcements should be cooperatively developed that encourage the use of good parenting skills by utilizing the Cooperative Extension Service, public schools, education service cooperatives, and other appropriate resources.
- 2- 2. Agencies providing services that impact early childhood education and child care should meet on a regular basis to ensure effective and efficient coordination.
- 2- 3. Services provided by child care centers, Head Start, and elementary schools should be articulated to ensure a smooth transition from child care to kindergarten. Head Start programs are required by the Head Start Performance Standards to ensure a smooth transition to public school. Written working agreements are utilized by Head Start programs to address this activity.
- 2- 4. Model prekindergarten checklists that may be modified by local school districts should be developed by the DCCECE and the ADE.
- 2- 5. School districts should conduct a spring kindergarten roundup.
- 2- 6. A website with day care and parenting class listings should be developed and maintained by the DCCECE.
- 2- 7. Full subsidies should be provided for child care to individuals up to a family income of 100 percent of the poverty level and on a declining, sliding scale up to a family income of 200 percent of the poverty level.
- 2- 8. Authority should be sought from the federal government to conduct a demonstration project with a block grant to the state for Head Start programs.
- 2- 9. Head Start should be provided on a year-round basis.

- 2-10. Local Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) efforts should explore child care employment opportunities for welfare recipients.
- 2-11. Liability problems now existing in child care centers should be identified, and reforms initiated to resolve them.
- 2-12. Where economically feasible, 24-hour child care centers should be provided.
- 2-13. Funds that are funneled from different agencies into child care should be coordinated.
- 2-14. Mandatory parenting classes that assist parents in preparing children to enter the educational system should be required for parents who are receiving public assistance.
- 2-15. The DCCECE should create a 501(c)(3) foundation to provide incentives to day care centers.
- 2-16. All child care providers receiving state funds should be required to take a minimum of 10 hours of documented, certified training each year. Currently, this rule only applies to public child care providers receiving state funds.
- 2-17. Staff development training content requirements for child care providers should be strengthened.
- 2-18. The DCCECE should be made a part of the ADE.

K-12

The Commission developed this report after hearing repeatedly from a broad-based group of business leaders and representatives of the ADE and the DWE that the overriding charge should be literacy first. Employers especially emphasized, "Give me a student who can read, write, compute, think, and work responsibly with others." For this reason, the Commission addressed both general education and workforce development. These two broad areas are overlapping and interdependent. A general education preparatory program lays the foundation skills in reading and mathematics. For example, these two areas will be requisite skills in the courses leading toward career paths found within the workforce development program. The workforce education program utilizes the foundation skills of the general education program within an applied setting, such as the use of the Pythagorean Theorem in building trades classes.

The Commission agreed that an ideal K - 12 system could prepare every student to be a productive citizen and successfully enter postsecondary education and/or the world of work. The Commission also agreed that to eliminate costly second-chance systems, first-chance public education should work for more students the first time, resulting in fewer dropouts, less remediation at the postsecondary level, and increased employer satisfaction. The goal for every student is to succeed and master basic skills. The following recommendations address general education, workforce education, higher education, and local school districts. For the recommendations to be realized, it is imperative that these entities work together.

K-12 Recommendations

- 3- 1. The State Board of Education (SBE) and the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities (SBWECO) should continue to develop and implement grade level and/or course standards for all disciplines.

Standards for grades K - 8 are essential as the foundation on which higher standards for grades 9 - 12 can be built. The discussion and recommendations on content standards, remediation, and other issues revolved around the issue of students succeeding and achieving mastery in the basic skills areas. The ADE reported that developments are underway to produce standards that are specific enough to allow districts to assess student performance at each grade level throughout their educational experience. The DWE has already developed content standards for the technical disciplines that include technical, workplace, and academic skills.

- 3- 2. The SBE and the SBWECO should ensure that all K - 12 curriculum frameworks, content standards, and assessments include education about careers through career awareness, exploration, and preparation.

Career awareness, exploration, and preparation were defined by the Commission.

- > Career awareness in grades K - 4 aids students in understanding the role of work, one's own uniqueness, and basic knowledge about groups of different occupations.
 - > Career exploration in grades 5 - 8 aids students in discovering individual interests, abilities, values, and needs by exploring jobs and seeing how they fit into the world of work through hands-on exploration, career assessment, career videos, job shadowing, career mentoring, or actual job experience.
 - > Career preparation in grades 9 - 12 aids students in developing a planned, coherent sequence of courses leading to or supporting a career major; in acquiring specific preparation, including the development of occupationally specific skills, the application of academic theory in real situations, and the mastery of the workplace basics; and in preparing for the transition to additional education, the workplace, or both.
- 3- 3. The SBE and the SBWECO should work together to ensure that the workplace readiness skills, such as problem solving and working in teams, are included in the frameworks and standards. The boards should develop appropriate strategies, models, and inservice training for teachers.
- 3- 4. The SBE shall establish policy to implement personal education plans for students in grades K - 3 who are not at grade level in reading and mathematics.

The personal or individual plan should take into account why the student is not achieving. Determining why the student is not achieving rather than just what he or she does not know may require specific inservice training for teachers and other educational personnel regarding assessment for learning disabilities and strategies for overcoming or coping with such disabilities now and in the future.

- 3- 5. As a longer-term goal, the SBE should encourage school districts to develop a personal education plan for every child in K - 12 who is not at grade level in the basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic/mathematics, listening, speaking, and information technology).

- 3- 6. The SBE and the SBWECO shall provide inservice training for teachers and counselors on how to develop and implement personal education plans for students.
- 3- 7. School districts should provide point-in-time, appropriate remediation and work to remove any stigma or negative connotations associated with remediation. The Legislature shall provide additional funding to accomplish the recommendations regarding personal education plans and extra time for remediation beyond the normal school day and school year.

Alternative teaching strategies should be employed in remediation. Students need remediation that is not only timely, but also appropriately delivered. Allowing a student to move from one year to the next without mastering the skills/standards for that grade level greatly compounds the remediation problem, particularly in the early grades. It was suggested that one means of identifying students who need remediation could be scores below the national average on the core content areas measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

- 3- 8. Social promotion should be eliminated for every child in K - 12 who is not at grade level in the basic skills.
- 3- 9. The SBE and the SBWECO shall establish policy requiring each school district to develop a career action planning system for all students that features strong involvement of parents and that allows interests and talents to be matched to coursework as students grow and mature. The goal of this system is to empower individuals to manage their own career development.

The purpose of career action planning is to help students and their parents explore educational and occupational possibilities and to make appropriate career decisions based on a solid foundation of information. In the career action planning model, the students receive intensive career guidance and counseling beginning in grade 8. The annual conferences with students and parents provide the opportunity to sit down with a trained teacher or advisor and review the career portfolio, determine a career focus, select courses, and set career goals through a four- to six-year plan of study.

- 3-10. Institutions of higher education shall significantly improve their teacher preparation programs to ensure that the future teaching force is fully credentialed to teach subject matter and is knowledgeable regarding the strategies to ensure that students achieve mastery in academic, workplace, and technical skills.

The Commission identified the following specific needs for teacher preparation and inservice training for the current teaching force:

- > Instruction of reading
- > Recognition of learning disabilities and application of strategies for overcoming disabilities
- > Use of assessment information to help students achieve
- > Application of learning to real life

- > Knowledge of business and industry needs for today's workers and for workers of the future
- > Knowledge of the career action planning model, including a four- to six-year plan of studies for students
- > Development of a personal education plan leading to lifelong career management skills
- > Knowledge of career clusters/majors
- > Knowledge of state standards (what students should know and be able to do)
- > Knowledge of work-based learning and apprenticeship
- > Assessment of skill standards
- > Internship in business and industry as part of certification
- > Knowledge of how to analyze test data and use that data for prescriptive work
- > Strategies that capitalize on the small class size in Arkansas
- > Teaching methodologies and strategies of the Arkansas Systemic Initiative and Rural Systemic Initiative

- 3-11. The SBE should set a rigorous timetable for attaining certification of all teachers in their subject matter areas. For example, middle-level mathematics teachers should at least have an endorsement in mathematics.
- 3-12. School administrator preparation programs should prepare future administrators to lead high-performance schools that prepare students to take the next steps along their educational paths.
- 3-13. Educators, with leadership from the SBE and the SBWECO, should take the initiative to open the education process for participation of business and industry to ensure meaningful collaboration.

Business and industry involvement needs to be more than just as a source of funds. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) recently released a report, "The Skilled Workforce Shortage: A Growing Challenge to the Future Competitiveness of American Manufacturing," which highlights the weaknesses of the workforce. The press release for the report stated that it is important for companies to work directly with schools to improve learning. The chairman of NAM encouraged firms to participate in tutoring and mentoring, summer jobs programs and cooperatives, and to contribute equipment. The Commission learned about the Educators in Industry program through which teachers serve internships in particular businesses or have class on-site visits to various businesses that allow them to better understand the needs of business and industry and to be better able to talk with them. The Commission also discussed

the need to have input from business and industry regarding accountability for workforce development, such as feedback on satisfaction with graduates' skills.

- 3-14. The SBE and the SBWECO should, through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), more aggressively connect the services available to students with disabilities in the K - 12 system as they prepare to transition from school to adult outcomes.

ARS provides technical assistance and collaboration in preparation of individual transition and/or employment plans and helps establish eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services as early as the final year of high school to help assure students with disabilities a seamless transition to higher education, vocational training, employment, or other outcomes consistent with the individuals' goals.

- 3-15. The Commission encourages school districts to participate in a program of public school choice to ensure access to workforce education programs.

- 3-16. The SBWECO and the school districts shall provide leadership to ensure that VSOs are an integral part of the instructional program for all students in workforce education programs.

The Commission listened to testimonies from vocational teachers regarding the positive accomplishments by students when a VSO is an integral part of the curriculum. The Commission members agreed that participation in a VSO should prepare all its members to

- > Make presentations to groups
- > Learn and practice skills in teamwork, communication, goal setting, and problem solving
- > Participate in community service projects
- > Understand and assess workforce opportunities available to them
- > Gain insights through career awareness and exploration that help them make appropriate career and academic decisions

- 3-17. The SBE is encouraged to continue discussions of increasing the core requirements to include an appropriate mathematics experience at each grade level.

Many of the Commission members wished to go on record as strongly encouraging educators to consider an appropriate math experience at each year of a child's education. However, it was the consensus of the Commission that the state and school district should first ensure that students are achieving mastery in the current requirements before adding requirements that will take more funding and resources. That basic philosophical consensus underlies the entire report with regard to K - 12 education. An appropriate math experience should include the minimum content equivalent of Algebra I and Geometry and might emphasize an increased amount of application learning.

- 3-18. The SBWECO shall adopt technical-career focuses (clusters/majors) and should continue development regarding a credential for those students completing a technical focus.

The Commission learned that the technical career clusters/majors have been under development for several years and have been reviewed by business and industry. The content standards on which those clusters/majors are built include technical skills as well as academic and workplace skills that students should possess and be able to demonstrate. The assessments (student-competency testing) are developed according to the content standards.

- 3-19. The SBE should provide leadership for districts to develop academic and professional career focuses, for example, teaching, medicine, science, etc.

Appropriate support should be given to school districts to enable students to develop educational plans with an academic/career focus – for example, a career focus in arts, media and communications, with majors in fine arts and performance arts, architecture, humanities, and design.

- 3-20. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and postsecondary institutions shall determine a method whereby the general education course grades of freshmen who are recent high school graduates may be reported back to their high schools and shall report the cost of such method to the Joint Interim Committee on Education of the General Assembly.

The Commission was pleased to learn that the ACT scores for recent high school graduates entering postsecondary institutions in Arkansas are being reported back to the high schools. Examples were given of instances where the school districts were able to use that information to improve their educational programs for future graduates. The ADHE informed the Commission that some states require postsecondary institutions to also report back the grades freshmen earn in their general education courses. This type of reporting would provide information to the school districts regarding those students who do not attend four-year institutions that require ACT test scores. The Commission was very interested in developing a method to ensure that the districts have information on the growing number of high school graduates entering the community and technical colleges.

- 3-21. School districts shall encourage all students to take the pre-ACT as part of career/graduation planning and shall make information available to all students regarding ACT preparatory courses.

The PLAN Assessment (often referred to as the pre-ACT) is a predictor test for the ACT, and it can be used to identify a student's specific weaknesses. PLAN and its 8th grade counterpart, DISCOVER, are a cooperative project of ACT and the ADE, DWE, and ADHE. Participation is voluntary for the school district and the students. During the 1996-97 term, more than 20,000 students took the PLAN on a voluntary basis.

- 3-22. The SBWECO shall develop a plan and set policies whereby a secondary vocational center shall be established in each cooperative region and in Pulaski County, as required by legislation.

The Commission heard reports from the Cooperative Education Services Coordinating Council (CESCC) that outlined basic tenets or parameters of the

regional delivery system for vocational education through secondary vocational centers. It is recommended that each center should offer at least two of the following types of programs:

- > Regular occupational programs not available through public schools or existing centers in the education service cooperative area
- > Advanced technology programs not offered by the public schools
- > Programs of an occupational nature designed for alternative learning environments that would include basic academic instructions and reinforcement of basic skills primarily through applied learning

3-23. Funding should be increased to support the additional costs for equipment associated with the secondary technical career programs.

3-24. Additional funding should be appropriated to fund the cost of equipment for laboratory-based academic core subjects.

Postsecondary

The ideal workforce development system is one that includes all of the activities and services that prepare individuals to be conscientious citizens and productive workers. It must be easily understood, and it must be based on the philosophy that learning begins before kindergarten and continues throughout life. It should be affordable for all citizens with clearly marked paths that enable individuals to move from one point to another with ease. It should be responsive to the diversity of the population and to persons with special needs.

An effective workforce education system should continually clarify the skills needed to equip workers for the changing jobs of the future; and it should offer performance-based instruction, credentialed learning, current career counseling, and other support services for youth and adults.

At the postsecondary level, workforce development is defined as education and/or training beyond high school which leads to an Arkansas High School Diploma (General Education Development [GED] tests), a certificate, a two-year to four-year degree, and other short-term, customized training designed to meet the needs of employers to upgrade the skills of the existing, emerging, and transitional workforces. The delivery system includes, but is not limited to, adult education programs, literacy councils, vocational rehabilitation programs, four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, technical colleges, technical institutes, apprenticeship programs, and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs.

Postsecondary Recommendations

- 4- 1. The system should be designed as a free-market system in which the institution that delivers the services is paid according to its ability to meet the needs of business and industry. This ability to design will speed up the rate at which necessary changes in education occur.
- 4- 2. Systems and mechanisms should be developed to measure, assess, and evaluate the effectiveness of education and training programs for workforce education.
- 4- 3. The utilization of time, space, and resources of public schools, adult education, and one- and two-year institutions should be expanded so that these institutions become community learning centers accessible to all citizens, including persons with disabilities.

- 4- 4. A primary mission of all one- and two-year institutions should be workforce development, which encompasses workforce education and preparation, workforce training, and service programs.
- 4- 5. All educational provider recipients of Workforce 2000 Development funds should report workforce development improvements made possible through the five years that Workforce 2000 Development funds have been distributed.
- 4- 6. The state should model progressive hiring and compensation practices which include incentives for education, training, and credentials.
- 4- 7. Private business and industry should be encouraged to establish hiring and compensation practices which include incentives for education, training, and credentials.
- 4- 8. The workforce development system should coordinate and partner with the state vocational rehabilitation program and the associated state network to assure that secondary students and adults seeking additional training or employment, as well as employees with disabilities, are provided equitable opportunities to participate and advance in the workforce as productive and taxpaying citizens.
- 4- 9. Nonprofit corporations and community-based organizations, such as literacy councils, shall be an integral part of the workforce development system.
- 4-10. At all levels of postsecondary education below the baccalaureate degree, students should demonstrate mastery in accordance with competency performance standards through an occupational credential.
- 4-11. Highly qualified business and industry employees should continue to be encouraged to assist in curriculum development and assist in teaching credit and noncredit courses in their fields of experience.
- 4-12. Teacher education programs should deliver graduates from postsecondary programs who have mastered measurable basic skills and the workplace and technical knowledge, skills, and abilities identified as important to business and industry.
- 4-13. Adult education/literacy programs should be used as the primary resource for remediation of the existing and transitional workforces. Two-year and community colleges should be used as a primary resource for the remediation of the emerging workforce.
- 4-14. The state of Arkansas should provide a new \$20 million fund for workforce education and training to be distributed through the regional business and education alliances utilizing regional business- and industry-directed and performance-based criteria designed to meet the needs as identified by annual regional short-term specific and long-term needs assessments.

The new \$20 million funding should be targeted for programmatic support and should be available to the following:

- > Companies using state-supported educational providers and community-based nonprofit organizations to upgrade the skills of employees
 - > State-supported educational providers and community-based nonprofit organizations, on a project-by-project basis, for training the workforce
- 4-15. State and local chambers of commerce and professional organizations should be used to communicate the need for business and industry to become and remain active partners in workforce education and training.

SUMMARY

The time for sound planning for the development of a workforce in Arkansas that will serve future needs has clearly arrived. All indications concerning individual success and economic and social development of a state show that education is the primary factor in developing a workforce that will be prepared to face the challenges of the technology, information-processing, and service needs of the 21st century. If Arkansas is to be a competitor in economic development in the years to come, it must begin now to prepare and upgrade a workforce that will serve those technology-based companies now operating in the state, encourage other companies to locate here, and provide the stimulus for more entrepreneurial activity.

One of the first steps in the planning effort must be the honest assessment of existing strengths and weaknesses, such as has been started by the Workforce Development Commission. Without this step, concentrated efforts to eliminate weaknesses and build upon strengths are not possible. At the same time, the responsibilities for workforce education must be clarified. Fragmented and uncoordinated activities, all with sincere and committed objectives, may still result in overlapping programs and the inefficient expenditure of public funds. The need for strengthening the Arkansas workforce is so important and the resources so limited that no degree of inefficiency can be tolerated.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY—

The Workforce Development Commission spent many hours over the course of several months examining the present system, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and making recommendations for improvement. As members learned about existing programs and services and heard testimony from various individuals and groups, questions were raised that simply could not be given the appropriate amount of attention in this study. To aid planners, the Governor, and the General Assembly in policy-making decisions, additional study will be needed in the following areas:

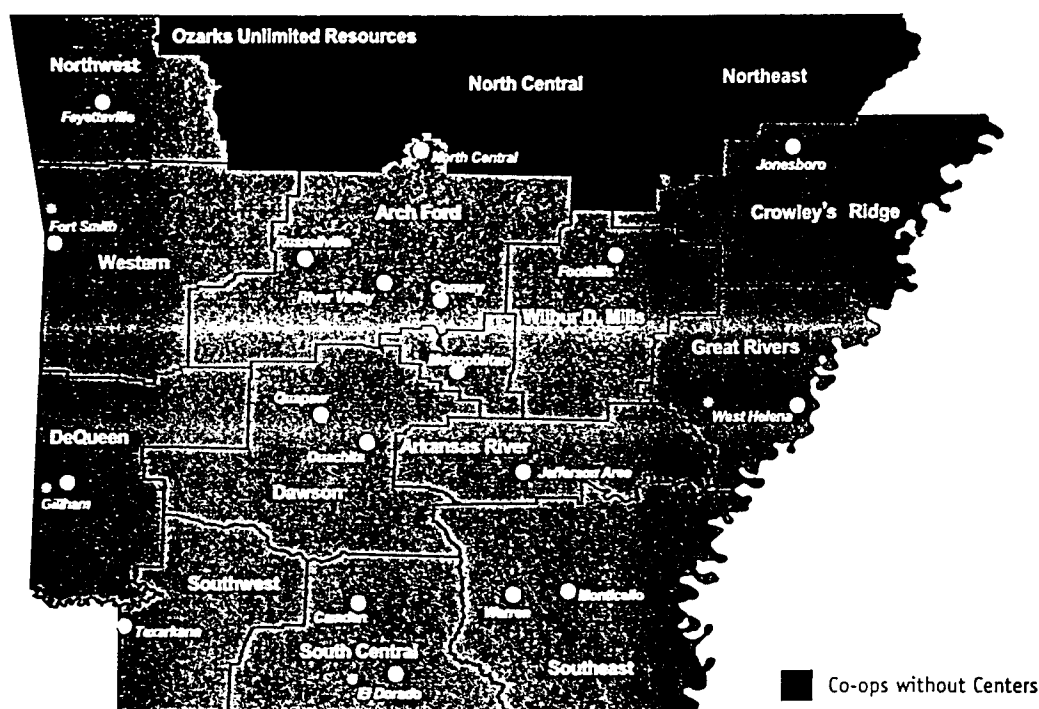
- > Funding of quality academic and vocational education, including
 - >> Adequate child care and prekindergarten programs
 - >> K - 12 including secondary area vocational centers
 - >> Quality workforce education programs
 - >> K - 12 technology to build core curriculum foundation skills
 - >> Modern buildings and updated laboratories
- > Providing access to quality academic and vocational education
- > Providing quality education for students with special needs
- > Determining the role of private proprietary schools in workforce education
- > Designing career plans which link to the most appropriate step at the postsecondary education level
- > Determining the role that instructional technology (i.e. distance learning and virtual learning) can play in workforce education

- > Clarifying the role of secondary area vocational centers and the means through which students can be simultaneously enrolled in classes at home schools and area centers
- > Assessing the academic rigor of secondary vocational programs
- > Examining all state and federally funded programs to determine which programs have made a difference in achieving student success
- > Articulating secondary and postsecondary programs
- > Encouraging universities to conduct research on how students learn and on how to successfully teach to individual differences
- > Determining, through a comprehensive review, the effectiveness and/or the need for current laws and regulations
- > Identifying governance and organization of higher education, postsecondary vocational technical education, and adult education
- > Identifying promising practices and methods to replicate for statewide use

APPENDIX I - SECONDARY AREA VOCATIONAL CENTERS AS OF APRIL 2, 1998

Secondary Area Vocational Centers in Relation to Education Service Cooperatives

(New centers approved April 2, 1998, to begin operations in the 1998/99 school year*)

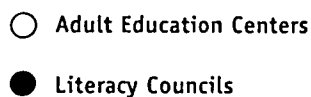


Secondary Area Vocational Centers

Area Vocational Center at Jonesboro
Area Vocational Technical Center at Russellville
Camden Career Center at Camden
Conway Area Careers Center at Conway
*DeQueen/Mena Cooperative Technical Education Center at Gillham
Foothills Vocational Center at Searcy
*Great Rivers Educational Cooperative Secondary Area Center at West Helena
Jefferson Area Vocational Center at Pine Bluff
Metropolitan Area Vocational Center at Little Rock

Monticello Occupational Educational Center at Monticello
North Central Vocational Center at Leslie
Ouachita Vocational Center at Malvern
Quapaw Vocational Center at Hot Springs
River Valley Technical Center at Morrilton
*SouthArk Career Center at El Dorado
Southeast Arkansas Community Based Educational Center at Warren
Texarkana Area Vocational Center at Texarkana
West Campus Technical Center at Fayetteville
*Western Arkansas Area Technical Center at Ft. Smith

Adult Education Centers - (Public)
Literacy Councils - (Private, Nonprofit)



xxxiv

~~APPENDIX III~~ ACRONYMS

ABC	Arkansas Better Chance
ADE	Arkansas Department of Education
AEDC	Arkansas Economic Development Commission
ADHE	Arkansas Department of Higher Education
ARS	Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
CESCC	Cooperative Education Services Coordinating Council
COPC	Career Opportunities Partnership Cabinet
DCCECE	Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
DHS	Department of Human Services
DWE	Department of Workforce Education
GED	General Educational Development (tests)
HECB	Higher Education Coordinating Board
HIPPY	Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NAM	National Association of Manufacturers
NCRVE	National Center for Research in Vocational Education
SBE	State Board of Education
SBWECO	State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities
SREB	Southern Regional Education Board
TEA	Transitional Employment Assistance
VSO	Vocational Student Organization
V-TECS	Vocational-Technical Education Consortium of States

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IV. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

A. Leadership

3. Building the Capacity of Local Boards and Youth Councils

Each local workforce investment board will establish a youth council. The youth council will be appointed by the local board chairperson in cooperation and consultation with the chief elected officials of the local area. The youth council will include in its active membership the following:

- Members of the local board with special interest or expertise in youth policy
- Representatives of youth service agencies, including juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies
- Representatives of local public housing authorities
- Parents of eligible youth seeking assistance under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act
- Representatives of the Job Corps, if a Job Corps Center is located in the area
- Other individuals as selected by the chairperson of the local board, selected in cooperation with the chief elected officials of the area

The local workforce investment board and chief elected officials will send letters to agencies, entities, and organizations with special interest in Arkansas' youth requesting recommendations for membership on the youth council. Other interested parties who have expertise in youth policy may make recommendations to the youth council by contacting the local workforce investment board and chief elected officials.

The members of the youth council who are not members of the local board will be voting members of the youth council and non-voting members of the local board. Their duties will include:

- Developing the portions of the local plan relating to youth services
- Recommending eligible providers of youth activities in the awarding of grants and contracts on a competitive basis
- Working with the local board to conduct oversight of the eligible providers of youth activities in the local area
- Coordinating local area youth activities authorized under Section 129 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998
- Other duties determined to be appropriate by the chairperson of the local board

To ensure the effective functioning of the local youth councils, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will offer training for all board members, including youth council members, on a periodic basis. This training may be in the form of conferences at the state or local level,

reading materials, courses to which local boards may choose to send members, Internet-based or CD-based short courses, access to national leadership courses, or other appropriate methods of increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities.

14. Comprehensive Services to Eligible Youth

The youth councils of the local workforce investment boards will be responsible for developing guidelines to ensure comprehensive youth service strategies. It is their responsibility to:

- Recommend to the local board eligible providers of youth activities to be awarded grants or contracts on a competitive basis by the local board to carry out the youth activities
- Work with the local board to conduct oversight of the eligible providers of youth activities in the local area
- Coordinate youth activities authorized under section 129 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 in the local area

During this process, strategies for providing comprehensive services to eligible youth, including coordination with foster care, education, welfare, and other relevant resources will be addressed. The youth councils will work with local Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) representatives in developing strategies for assisting youth with special needs or barriers to employment, including youth who are pregnant, parenting, or have disabilities.

In addition to providing representation on and coordination through the youth councils, representatives of Job Corps, Youth Opportunity Grant recipients (should any be awarded in Arkansas), and other youth programs will be represented formally on the local workforce investment boards as One-Stop partners. In addition, interested entities and individuals will be invited to offer input to youth councils and local workforce investment.

15. Youth Program Design

The local workforce investment boards will select the local providers of youth services and activities funded by Title I of the Workforce Investment Act. The local board will ensure that parents, participants, and other members of the community with experience relating to programs for youth are involved in the design and implementation of the programs for youth under the Workforce Investment Act. Strategies for accomplishing this must be addressed in the local youth plans.

The local youth councils will ensure that funds allocated to a local area for WIA Title I youth activities are used to conduct youth programs that:

- Provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant. These assessments will include a review of basic skills, occupational

skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive service needs, and developmental needs of each participant.

- Develop service strategies for each participant that will identify training and employment goals (including, in appropriate circumstances, nontraditional employment), appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant.

In addition, these programs must provide:

- Preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities, in appropriate cases
- Strong linkages between academic and occupational learning
- Preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities, in appropriate cases
- Effective connections to intermediaries with strong links to the job market and to local and regional employers

Each eligible applicant for WIA Title I youth services will be provided the following:

- Information on the full array of appropriate services that are available through the local board, other eligible providers, or One-Stop partners
- Referral to appropriate training and educational programs that have the capacity to serve the applicant

Each eligible program provider will ensure that if an applicant does not meet the enrollment requirements of a particular program or cannot be served for other reasons, the applicant will be referred to appropriate programs that meet the basic skills and training needs of the applicant.

These programs will include the following:

Preparation for Postsecondary Educational Opportunities — These programs will provide tutoring, study skills training, and instruction, leading to completion of secondary school, including dropout prevention strategies. The Career Opportunities regional partnerships will provide professional development for school counselors. They will also promote the development of articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary institutions. Articulation agreements encourage students to continue their education after high school because they have already begun earning credits.

Strong Linkages Between Academic and Occupational Learning — The emphasis for youth activities is not simply on work, but on academic and occupational learning. Each program will be evaluated on how well it accomplishes these goals.

Preparation for Unsubsidized Employment Opportunities — The ultimate goal of all preparatory activities is unsubsidized employment in the appropriate skill level for each participant. Youth activities should also be designed with this goal. Each program will be

evaluated on its preparation for appropriate unsubsidized employment opportunities for the participant.

Effective Linkages With Intermediaries With Strong Employer Connections — Strong employer involvement is key to success for all programs serving youth. For example, the majority of all workforce investment boards must come from the private business sector. These strong connections are vital to effective youth activities. Employment opportunities with local businesses should be considered when designing youth activities.

Alternative Secondary School Services — Alternative secondary school services will be encouraged and assisted where appropriate.

Summer Employment Opportunities — Programs will provide summer youth employment that is directly linked to academic and occupational learning, including tutoring, study skills training, and other instruction, which prevent dropout. Local boards and chief elected officials will involve the local community in the selection of services to be provided to youth by soliciting recommendations for membership on the youth council. The local board and youth council may provide other elements and strategies as appropriate to serve the needs and goals of the participants, including decisions about additional services to be provided to youth during the summer months or year-round services and how much of available youth funds will be used for summer and for year-round youth activities. Individual assessment will be a key element in determining the youth's specific needs.

Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences — Paid and unpaid work experience will be provided to youth on a year-round basis as a part of the menu of services available to youth. These work experience programs will provide youth with first-time work experiences. They will provide an introduction to the world of work and include efforts to improve work ethics, hygiene, and similar soft skills. Work experience may be provided in government and non-government entities on a paid or unpaid basis. These services will include internships and job shadowing, as appropriate. The youth council will coordinate activities from many sources, including those of Career Opportunities.

Occupational Skill Training — Assessments will assist in determining occupational skill training needs for youth. Labor market information and data also will be used in determining the skill training to be provided. Occupational skill training will be provided to youth, as appropriate, based on assessment and the participant's desire and need for training.

Leadership Development Opportunities — Youth will be provided training and services that will improve their leadership skills. These opportunities may be obtained through experiences in

the workplace such as job shadowing, youth-tutoring-youth programs, participation in community programs and projects, and similar activities.

Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling — Comprehensive guidance and counseling will be an aggregate part of the services provided to youth. Local boards and youth councils will coordinate the efforts of providing counseling, guidance, and other like services through the local schools and other entities such as Career Opportunities regional partnerships, viable One-Stop partners for youth, and other entities that provide and support career guidance and exploration activities.

Supportive Services — Supportive services will be provided in an effort to avoid and prevent youth from dropping out of programs and activities provided in the local area. Supportive services may include such things as tutoring, guidance, and counseling, as well as child care, transportation, information about the availability of these services, referrals to these services, job search, and similar activities.

Follow-Up Services — Youth enrolled in WIA activities will be provided with follow-up services for a minimum of twelve months following completion of participation in activities. Follow-up data will also be collected to assist in the determination and measurement of program success.

V. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

A. Working With Local Boards to Determine Level of Performance Goals

Performance levels will be negotiated with local workforce investment boards in compliance with Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999. (See Part II, above.)

D. Collaboration With Key Partners and Continuous Improvement

The Governor of Arkansas and the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board assure that collaboration with key youth partners will occur in development of youth activities. It is further assured performance goals will be developed and monitored so that continuous improvement will be assured.

The Arkansas workforce development system has a long-standing commitment to continuous improvement as evidenced by the fact that half of the current service delivery areas were Enterprise members. In addition to striving to continually improve performance outcomes, we commit to review processes on an ongoing basis in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency, resulting in increased customer satisfaction.